

## HISTORY OF DOSTER HALL

The School of Home Economics at the University of Alabama, third largest in the South, is entering its third decade of service to the people of the state.

Here at The University of Alabama, whose enrollment of women is the largest of any Southern university, one out of every four women is enrolled in the School of Home Economics whose dean, Dr. Agnes Ellen Harris, has served continuously in that capacity since this division of the University was formally organized.

The work of the School of Home Economics revolves around one center—the home. And in this work it is performing one of the most important functions possible for the state in these days when the institution of the American home claims so much attention.

In the School of Home Economics it is not a question of training young women for marriage or a career but for marriage and a career. Throughout the 21-year history of the school it has been steadfastly maintained that marriage is a career for which young women should and can receive training in a number of fields such as family life, foods and nutrition, and clothing and textiles.

The home, whether one of the most privileged of its community, or an apparently insignificant one in a remote, isolated spot, and more especially the personalities in the home, is the most vital force for good in the community.

Any educational effort which helps people to understand themselves, their prejudices, their reasons for their choices and their decisions is of the most significant value in the building of the home and community.

The child development courses and those in family relationships offered in the School of Home Economics help students to understand themselves and the community forces which guided them for good or ill in their development. The laboratory observation and practice with babies and small children as well as observation of school-age children through adolescence prepares students for the all-important job of homemaking and parenthood.

Then too, food is the first essential of life. The infant demands it on the day of birth and food continues as a prime demand throughout life. The way food is prepared determines whether it is enjoyed or not. It also determines whether the full value, the life-giving properties of that food, are completely received.

Food preparation is a skill and a science—not acquired by chance, but by training. Therefore, students in the Department of Foods and Nutrition of the School of Home Economics, earn through theory and practice, not only how, but why: how to adapt recipes to supplies on hand; how temperature can make food tough or tender; how to can and freeze foods.

Today every housewife and head of the family knows what a large portion of the family budget goes for food. Courses in food purchasing teach students how to know grades and quality in food.

Other essentials of life are those of clothing and shelter. Suitable and becoming dress at reasonable cost is important in social and professional contacts. Courses in clothing and textiles emphasize development in discrimination to aid the homemaker in making and selecting a wardrobe for herself and her family.

Skill in constructing her own apparel and the children's clothing stretches the dollars budgeted for family clothing and contributes to personal satisfactions growing out of creative work.

To create beauty and comfortable surroundings in the home is of inestimable value in family and social relationships. When the homemaker is able to select and make slip covers, curtains, draperies, and other household furnishing it is a tremendous asset in an Alabama home.

These skills and abilities are based on a knowledge of textiles, colors, principles of design as applied to dress and home furnishing and construction techniques.

Today, as never before, there is a demand for trained home economists to fill positions in business, industry and professional fields. These demands are particularly heavy in the fields of research, nursery school directors and teachers, dietitians and nutritionists, specialists in clothing and textiles, consumer problems and teaching.

The roles of business and industry in Alabama will find many graduates of the School of Home Economics at The University holding responsible positions. Many new and interesting careers for young women in business and industry are being opened up as the realization spreads that training in home economics is important and vital to the many problems and possibilities in these fields.

Business firms employing home economists are of various types. Some deal with fabrics for clothing and household use, some with wearing apparel or home furnishing. The home economist may do educational or promotional work. She may work in a laboratory testing textiles or in quality control. She may design the fabric or the garment.

In merchandising, the home economist may work behind the counter in preparation for such positions as assistant buyer, buyer, head of stock, or fashion coordinator.

The trained home economist helps the manufacturer and retailer in providing well-selected, serviceable products and in turn helps the consumers in the selection, use and care of furnishings and apparel best suited to their needs.

Because people must eat, at home or in restaurants and whether they are sick or well, there are many professional careers open to young women in this field. One of the most important is that of a hospital dietitian. Nutritionists with public health services and the Agricultural Extension Services are other types of positions opened to these young women who are trained in home economics.

Feeding of children, especially through the school lunch program, is nationally recognized as an essential health measure and is an accepted part of the educational program. Here, again, training is offered in the School of Home Economics for such a career.

New careers are opening up for students who prepare for homemaking and at the same time specialize in child development. There is a demand in the business world for persons who understand the needs, growth and interests of children at different maturity levels. Airline hostesses, for instance, find this information indispensable.

In many of the mill villages throughout Alabama, well equipped nursery schools are maintained for workers' children.

The resources and facilities of the School of Home Economics, in keeping with the functions of a state institution, are not confined solely to the teaching of students on the undergraduate and graduate level.

There are many fields in which the School works with organized groups in the state in training, consultative, and cooperative capacities.

For instance this summer the Ninth Annual Conference of School Lunch Manager of Alabama will be held in the School of Home Economics. This is the oldest, continuous series of workshops for lunch managers in the country. Last year 200 managers attended the two weeks' conference.

Members of the staff of the Family Life Department conduct or assist in workshops for nursery school, day nursery, and kindergarten teachers both on the campus and in different centers in the state. A two-week conference for such workers is conducted on the campus.

One of the popular features of the work of the Department of Clothing and Textiles is the staging of fashion shows, either at the University, or in other centers of the state. These demonstrations include presentations of a specific idea such as good clothing design or exhibit work of students showing, for instance, functional dress designs or cotton for winter wear.

For the past five years members of the staff of the Department of Foods and Nutrition have edited a monthly bulletin, "School Lunch and Nutrition News," sent to lunch managers and teachers in Alabama, Florida, and South Carolina.

For the past 19 years the Summer Institute of the Alabama Parent-Teacher Association has been held at the University in the School of Home Economics building with members of the school's faculty contributing to the program.

While many of these activities of service to state-wide groups are confined to the summer period, there are other areas in which the School of Home Economics is at work throughout the state on a year-around basis.

There is hardly a week that passes without some member of the faculty and staff appearing before some social, civic, or community group in lectures, forums, discussions or workshops.

Staff members also give much time in participating on committees or with organizations concerned with the various fields embraced in home economics.

Many of the organizations in which members of the faculty hold membership and with which they work actively are of a regional and national scope.

Progress in the South depends on research. And while home economics, as a formal study program, is comparatively young in the 118-year history of the University there is a great need and a growing demand for advanced study and investigation in the various home economics fields.

The fact that Alabama is a cotton growing state whose textile industry is one of its largest and most important, has channeled many studies and projects at the University into the areas of cotton fabrics, designing and making comfortable, well-style apparel.

A number of original designs have been worked out to show the possibilities of cotton for year-around wear. Comfortable uniforms, house dresses and children's garments have been designed.

In addition to this type of work, studies are being conducted on the service-ability and durability of various types of materials in common use in the South.

In the Laboratory of Human Nutrition, established in 1942, the freezing of figs and other local foods is a research project. Other nutrition studies include possible causes of tooth decay among children; finding the state of health and nutrition of school children, and ways and means of improving it; study of availability and price of fruits and vegetables, frozen, fresh, and canned, throughout the year; factors influencing blood levels of vitamin C; losses of vitamin C in vegetables stored in the refrigerator; amount of waste in school lunch programs and causes of waste.

Carrying the resources, facilities and personnel in various fields at the University to all sections of the state in which there is a need and local interest is a function of the University Extension Division.

Serving as a liaison to the School of Home Economics in this field is the Home and Family Life Service of the Extension Division, directed by Miss Elizabeth Carmichael.

Several well-organized programs of this division are now in operation and include:

1. Family Life Institutes
2. Leadership Training Conferences
3. Professional Training in Nursery School and Kindergarten Education
4. Classes for Expectant Mothers
5. Workshops of Public Health Nurses
6. Aid to Women's Organizations

A Family Life Institute is a two or three-day conference which deals with family problems. Its purpose is to present an opportunity for a community to study some of the civic, social, economic, and personal problems confronting young people and adults today.

The conferences are sponsored jointly by local community groups with assistance and cooperation from the Home and Family Life Service.

During the past four years, six cities in Alabama have held such institutes. Plans are underway for a fourth Family Life Institute in Mobile which will reach approximately 500 people. During the next few months similar institutes will be held in Gadsden, Sylacauga and Brewton.

The shortage of trained workers in the field of child development and family life education makes it necessary for many groups of parents to conduct their own programs. This can be accomplished through a series of meetings in which eight or more local groups desire to cooperate with such a school.

The University will provide a staff to conduct such training. In planning a leadership training school, it is necessary for all participating groups to take part in the choice of topics.

In Mobile the fourth Leadership Training School began in February sponsored by the Mobile P.T.A. Council.

Courses in Nursery School and Kindergarten Education were offered at the University Centers in Mobile and Montgomery during the past year. The courses were under the supervision of Miss Carmichael with assistance from members of the staff at the University and other professional workers in the field.

The Birmingham Branch of the American Association of University Women has sponsored a series of classes for expectant mothers along with the Jefferson County Health Board and the Family Life Service. These classes include seven meetings, among which is one for expectant fathers. In the two years these classes have been conducted, certificates have been awarded to 132 women.

During the past year, a workshop for the Jefferson County Health Nurses was conducted by the director of the Home and Family Life Service. The purpose of the course was to give the nurses a better understanding of human behavior so that they might counsel more wisely the parents.

The Home and Family Life Service offers many opportunities in the field of adult education to women's organizations, unorganized groups of women who desire to study, civic organizations, both men and women's groups interested in family and community welfare, and professional groups.

Courses in pre-marital guidance can be organized by Y.M. or Y.W.C.A. organizations, youth groups, and others and assistance is given to professional groups in planning and conducting conferences or workshops either on or off the University campus.

As is the case with the faculty of the School of Home Economics, the director of the Home and Family Life Service is in demand for lecture-discussion groups on family life education throughout the state.

## DO YOU KNOW?

That the following are interesting signposts in the history of home economics at this University:

- 1911 Summer Session: First course in home economics offered
- 1917 Catalogue announced home economics would be offered as demanded “until a four year course leading to a degree has been obtained.”
- 1919 Survey recommended that the University offer home economics both on the undergraduate and graduate level.
- 1927 Dr. John R. McLure presented a brief “Home Economics an Essential Factor in the Education of All Women” to the Council of Education of Alabama, which then approved the establishment of a program in home economics and home economics education. In 1927 catalogue 23 courses are listed.
- 1929 Doster Hall was built.
- 1947 Doster Hall was given wholly to home economics. Equipment Laboratories and Family Life Department are in additional buildings.