

Infant Laboratory Opened in 1942.

Experts in the fields of sociology, welfare, child care and many others became interested in the laboratory that was one of the first in the nation. Among the experts who visited were Dr. Mary Sweeney, Constance Warren, Willard Olson, Margaret Mead, Winifred Rand, Grace Langdon, and Don Prescott. Later, Dr. Benjamin Spock and First Lady Ladybird Johnson visited the laboratory.

During Dean Crenshaw's tenure at The University of Alabama, the School of Home Economics annexed Adams Hall, which included the child development program's infant lab.

The Tuscaloosa News, May 2, 1944

Local and University friends of the members of Nu Beta of Chi Omega requests the honor of your presence at a tea honoring Doctor Margaret Mead Wednesday afternoon, May third, nineteen hundred and forty-four, chapter house, four-thirty to five-thirty.

The Tuscaloosa News, Feb. 26, 1966

Mrs. Johnson, following a brief tour of the home of Dr. and Mrs. Rose, then visited the UA Child Development Center which is assisting in the training of teachers for the "Head Start" program.

When the First Lady arrived at the center, a group of five-year-olds, who are not a part of the Head Start program, were having lunch. She moved from table to table chatting with the children and their teachers.

At one table, Mrs. Eugenia Branscomb, a graduate assistant in the Head Start training program at the UA, commented to Mrs. Johnson that she would be attending a meeting in Washington soon as Alabama's representative on the National Committee on Children and Youth.

Before leaving for the airport, Mrs. Johnson was conducted on a short tour of the campus where she spent six weeks as a student in 1931.

April 1970—West Annex open house brochure:

Since its founding 29 years ago, the enrollment in the Infant Laboratory has expanded from one baby to nine children, ranging in age from a few weeks to three years. The first babies lived with their mothers in the Child Development Center. After several years of planning, the present laboratory situation was developed. Here the Department of Human Development helps both mothers and students learn more about family relations and develop a healthful, wholesome attitude about young children through experience and observation.

Special features of the design of the Infant laboratory are low shelves with easy access to toys and higher shelves for storing art materials and phonograph records out of reach by the children. Since young children are interested in climbing, the low shelves are sturdy enough to hold them. Good design in children's furniture and play equipment is featured, as well as appropriate colors and easy-to-clean materials. Observation booths provide a one-way view into the playrooms.

Alabama Alumni News, Nov-Dec 1971

The infant laboratory located on the first floor (of Adams Hall) provides care for children ranging in age from six weeks to two years whose parents are University of Alabama students. Students are able to participate in the care of the children and watch their development as they learn to reach for objects, crawl, walk, and talk.

An observation room allows parents and students to watch, undetected, the children's activities. The playroom is scaled down to their size with miniature chairs, low shelves for toys, and sinks placed on their level for easy hand washing. Formica walls make for easy cleaning. A fenced-in playground with miniature gym equipment attracts the under-two set on sunny days.

The Tuscaloosa News, Sept. 28, 1971, p. 8:

Dr. Benjamin Spock visited the University of Alabama as the leadoff speaker for the Emphasis program on Sept. 22.

HDFS History to 2013:

In 1942 the nursery school facility became The Child Development Center, and a separate laboratory was established for infants and toddlers. This Infant Laboratory provided students an opportunity to observe growth and development of children six weeks to three years of age. In 1943, Lea Cowles Masters, a well-known specialist in infant development who established a nursery school for the United Nations, was hired by The University to teach an infancy course and to direct the laboratory. One of the first in the United States, the Infant Laboratory was considered unique and was visited by some of the most well-known child development experts at that time. Margaret Mead, Grace Langdon, and Mary Sweeny were among the early visitors to the laboratory. Later, in the early 1970's, Benjamin Spock visited the child development laboratories. Other long-time directors of the labs, Mrs. Martha Strickland (Child Development Center) and Mrs. Arlee Vallery (Infant Laboratory, 1968-85), were known for having considerable impact on the education of young children, their families and college students majoring in early childhood education.

In 2005, the Child Development Center and the Infant Lab combined with the University Child Care Services to become The Children's Program at the newly built, state-of-the-art Child Development Research Center (CDRC). The most advanced of its kind in the southeast, the 64,000-sq.ft. research facility is equipped with the latest multi-media research technology, seven large research suites, and eight research rooms. Each research room has an adjoining observation booth where faculty and students can collect data for examination.

Of course, this picture changes muchly, but it shows the trend.