

PURDUE GIRLS: THE FEMALE EXPERIENCE AT A LAND-GRANT
UNIVERSITY, 1887-1913

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Introduction

This project began with the simple question: What did women study while enrolled in a college or university at the turn of the twentieth century? Historians thus far have proved unable to provide a succinct answer. Academic options and collegiate culture varied by geography and type of institution – women’s college, land-grant, co-educational public and private – making it understandably difficult for those who have written books to compare multiple campuses. In response, what follows is an examination of the academic lives of female students at Purdue University, Indiana’s land-grant university, and the way they were perceived by themselves, as well as by their male peers, male university administrators, and male professors. While each student had a unique experience at Purdue, this study seeks to find common threads.

Through Purdue’s course catalogs, known as *Annual Registers*; the student newspaper, the *Purdue Exponent*; and the university’s yearbook, *The Debris*, this project looks to create an image of the academic life of over five hundred irregular students and nearly twelve hundred regular undergraduates at Purdue in the quarter century between 1887 and 1913.¹ This project strives to create a sense of academic life for female students at Purdue University through reviewing the academic choices of women at this place and time and analyzing changes in female enrollment, with a closer look into the emergence and popularity of the home economics field at Purdue. The intellectual life of Purdue women at this time reflected the expectations of the American farming community, as well as Indianan and American middle-class society. While it appears

¹ These numbers do not reflect the nearly forty women who were both irregular (non-degree seeking) and regular (degree seeking) students during their university years; I counted each woman just once.

that some women took their academic careers seriously, female students most commonly attended Purdue University for the experience of college life.²

Historians and contemporary observers alike saw what is now considered the first generation of women (those registered between 1860 and 1889) enrolled in institutions of higher education as “a serious and dedicated band of pioneers, eager to prove themselves intellectually, and with little time or inclination for frivolity.”³ Women were often well into their twenties or thirties when they first started enrolling in colleges and universities in the 1860s. Attending an institution of higher learning meant a commitment of four years in order to receive a bachelor’s degree; however, in the early years of higher education for women, when college culture had yet to develop, many found it necessary to take breaks from their educational pursuits to work, often as teachers, so they could afford their tuition. The second generation, educated at the turn of the twentieth century, became better known for their “more expansive spirit,” in other words they took their academic life seriously, but were also very interested in maintaining an active social life, joining clubs, and proving their physical vitality through athletics.⁴ By 1900, female college students were much more likely to be in their late teens and early twenties.⁵

Historically, Indiana has fallen short of the norm when it comes to progress and reform. As Indiana historian James H. Madison explains, “Change in Indiana has been evolutionary rather than revolutionary. . . . Moderation has been the Indiana way, a moderation firmly anchored in respect for tradition, in appreciation of the achievements

² Nationally, men too pursued higher education for the “college experience.” For more information on this see Daniel A. Clark, *Creating the College Man: American Mass Magazines and Middle-Class Manhood 1890-1915* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010).

³ Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 30.

⁴ Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 95.

⁵ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 70.

of the generations that preceded.”⁶ Madison argues that the state’s homogeneity kept Indiana behind the national curve as life across the nation changed at the turn of the twentieth century. Between 1890 and 1910, and even after, Indiana’s population remained over ninety-seven percent white, and nearly ninety-four percent of the state’s residents were native-born in the same time period. Also, most lived in rural areas or small towns, and even Indiana’s largest cities were known for their small town feel.⁷

Clinging to tradition did not hurt the state in some instances, but Indiana’s distaste for change hindered necessary growth and improvement in the area of education. While eighty percent of Indiana children ages five to eighteen were enrolled in school at the turn of the twentieth century, Indiana’s education standards lagged well behind its neighboring states. At the close of the nineteenth century, “Indiana ranked sixth among ten Midwestern states in average length of school term, seventh in amount of money spent on each pupil, and ninth in literacy rates among native-born whites.”⁸ Many Indianans believed that education should be dealt with locally and feared the implementation of education taxes. Madison described Indianans at this time as having “a pioneer suspicion of education,” which prevented any statewide educational legislation from being passed or enforced.⁹

In 1897, the Indiana General Assembly passed a law requiring school attendance for children ages eight through fourteen. School consolidation followed in 1907, closing any school with fewer than twelve students. Those in rural areas would have disliked these reforms most of all, as the low population density would have required children to

⁶ James H. Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1986), xiii.

⁷ Madison, *The Indiana Way*, 168, 175-178, 327.

⁸ Madison, *The Indiana Way*, 180.

⁹ Madison, *The Indiana Way*, 182.

commute further in order to go to school, and many families needed their children at home most of the year to work on their or someone else's farm. Mistrust of education at the primary and secondary levels likely carried over into the realm of higher education, which helps explain the troubles Purdue University faced with low matriculation rates during the first few decades after its founding.

American society underwent a great deal of change at the turn of the twentieth century, especially when it came to its perceptions of women and higher education in general. As Barbara M. Solomon explains, "by 1900 these female collegians were no longer regarded as social rebels" as the pioneering generation of women had been.¹⁰ While many feared that the nuclear family would be undermined by highly-educated women who would no longer want to marry or reproduce, Americans were at least fairly certain that women could physically handle the same intellectual rigors as men; however, questions abounded about what women should study and to what use they should put such an education.¹¹

Few historians have been able to effectively communicate what the academic lives of women were like while attending colleges and universities at the turn of the twentieth century. Discovering what women studied at this time is hardly an easy task. As time passed, women infiltrated fields of study once reserved for men but in very small numbers, flocked to newly minted departments of home economics, and sometimes attended classes in which they were not formally enrolled. This study attempts to further illuminate the academic choices of women at the turn of the twentieth century, specifically at land-grant universities.

¹⁰ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 77.

¹¹ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 119-122.

On the whole, women who attended college before 1920 came from families belonging to a growing middle class. Most often the fathers of these women, in both Indiana and across the nation, were lawyers, doctors, professors, ministers, businessmen, and farmers.¹² For those belonging to America's poorest families, higher education was generally out of the question. Even at a school like Purdue University, where tuition was free to all Indiana residents, the cost of room, board, and books, as well as the loss of a pair of able hands at home proved much too steep. Women from very wealthy families also rarely attended institutions of higher learning. Their parents dismissed a college education as nothing but "preparation for women who had no option but to be school teachers," while their daughters could expect a life of leisure.¹³

Across the nation, nearly all female college students were white. As late as 1911, black women made up just one-third of one percent of female college and university students. Common reasons for the low enrollment rate included lack of funds or outright discrimination. Also, black women who sought such a formal education were more likely to receive industrial training rather than a liberal arts degree.¹⁴ David Robert Lewis, Purdue University's first black graduate, received his B.S. in Civil Engineering in 1894.¹⁵ While university publications make it difficult to determine who the first black woman was to enroll in or graduate from Purdue University, it is quite certain that she was not a student until after 1913.

¹² Andrea Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch: Women & Coeducation in the American West* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 152.

¹³ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 63-65; Lynn D. Gordon, "The Gibson Girl Goes to College: Popular Culture and Women's Higher Education in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920," *American Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 217.

¹⁴ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 76.

¹⁵ "...Or the Fire Next Time: A Timeline of African American History at Purdue, created by Purdue University Libraries Archives and Special Collections, <http://www.lib.purdue.edu/spcol/orthefirenexttime/Or%20the%20Fire%20Next%20Time.pdf> (accessed 3/26/2012)

Purdue University generally catered to young and predominantly single women. The United States Federal Census shows that female undergraduates at Purdue most often began their college career between the ages of sixteen and nineteen (See Appendix II); if they graduated, they most often did so in their very early twenties. Older women, both single and married, were more likely to enroll in the Winter Short Course. Irregular students, were more commonly married than not. Regular undergraduates at Purdue were always single, and it proved not uncommon for these women to remain living at home and unmarried in their thirties, forties, and beyond.¹⁶ The varied programs hosted by only land-grant universities helped broaden the demographics of women attending college and universities.

The Morrill Act of 1862

The first Morrill Act, officially known as the Morrill-Wade Act of 1862, revolutionized higher education in the United States. The Act endowed a donation of land to states and territories that desired a college or university that provided a practical education based on “agriculture and mechanic arts.” In order to provide land allocations in proportion to a state’s population, the Act required the federal government to furnish “thirty thousand acres of public land per representative and senator in Congress.”¹⁷ In the end, the Act gifted over seventeen million acres of land.¹⁸ Not only did land-grant colleges and universities provide a practical education unavailable at most institutions of

¹⁶ "Index to the 1880 United States Federal Census," <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed 10/9/2012; "Index to the 1900 United States Federal Census," <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed 10/6/2012; "Index to the 1910 United States Federal Census," <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed 10/6/2012.

¹⁷ The National Archives, *Our Documents: 100 Milestone Documents from the National Archives*, eds. Christine Compston and Rachel Filene Seidman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 84.

¹⁸ Willis Rudy, *Building America's Schools and Colleges: The Federal Contribution* (Cranbury, NJ: Cornwallbooks, 2003), 23.

higher learning, but residents of their respective states attended these schools tuition-free. Sending a child away to attend a college or university had once been just about the only option, and a costly one at that, and land-grants expanded access to higher education. Supporters of agricultural and industrial colleges lobbied for federal aid only to be stymied by those who believed that such an act would infringe on states' rights for decades before the Act's passage. The election in 1860 of a Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, who believed in the importance of public education, and the dramatic shift of political power in Congress with the secession of eleven southern states, made passage of the Morrill Act possible.

Some states sold their federal land allotments to fund institutions that were already established, while others, such as Indiana, founded new colleges and universities and formed their campuses on granted lands.¹⁹ The Morrill Act did not mention female students or a need for educational equality between the sexes, so it was up to each state to determine if its land-grant university would accept only males or become co-educational. Similarly, the Act did not outline what subjects should be open to land-grant students or how they should be taught; it required only that states which received federal funds use the allotments to support the fields of agriculture and mechanic arts, the two subjects of study written into the act.²⁰ Like many land-grant universities, Purdue opened its doors (eventually) to both men and women and created schools and departments focused on both classical and practical fields of study.

¹⁹ *Our Documents*, 84.

²⁰ Rudy, *Building America's Schools and Colleges*, 22.

The Founding and Early History of Purdue University

The Indiana General Assembly first discussed the prospect of founding an agricultural university in 1863, but Purdue University's first classes did not begin until September 16, 1874.²¹ Although the first Morrill Act had passed in 1862, many roadblocks, political and otherwise, foiled the founding of the institution any earlier. The Morrill Act itself was long fought for and had supporters in Indiana from the beginning. In 1858 and 1859, the Indiana State Board of Agriculture resolved to support the passage of the Morrill Bill by the United States Congress; however, the Indiana General Assembly lacked interest despite the fact that its neighboring states, Michigan and Ohio, had already established their own agricultural colleges. Robert W. Topping, author of Purdue's most recent institutional history, explains that despite Indiana's predominately rural and agrarian population, "[t]he agricultural movement in Indiana may have bubbled to some extent, but it certainly did not boil as it had elsewhere."²² Perhaps one reason for some of the disinterest lay with farmers, who generally believed no university could teach them anything new about farming nor improve their way of life.²³

With the Morrill Act passed, the Indiana Legislature began to discuss the ways in which Indiana could use its newly acquired federal funds. It spent years trying to determine the best path to follow; both Indiana University and Northwestern Christian University (now Butler University) proposed plans for using the money. Some legislators even tried to find ways to finagle the Morrill money to fund a soldiers' home and public grade schools, while others wanted to divide the funding among several

²¹ Purdue University Libraries Archives and Special Collections, "Historical Timeline," <http://www4.lib.purdue.edu/spcol/putimeline/> (accessed 3.23.2011); Robert W. Topping, *A Century and Beyond: The History of Purdue University* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1989), 21, 24.

²² Topping, *A Century and Beyond*, 21-22.

²³ Topping, *A Century and Beyond*, 123.

schools throughout the state, public and private. One legislator suggested founding twelve new colleges, one in Bloomington and one built in each of Indiana's eleven congressional districts.²⁴

In 1865, the Indiana legislature finally accepted a Morrill grant and formed the Trustees of the Indiana Agricultural College. Then the battle ensued over where this new college should be located. Cities and counties throughout the state put in bids of land and money in hopes of becoming its home. It came down to Marion, Monroe, and Tippecanoe Counties, each of which continued to add buildings, land, and money to their bids until they were equally balanced. That is until John Purdue, a wealthy industrialist from Lafayette, Indiana, offered a personal donation of \$100,000. He increased the gift to \$150,000, which the Indiana Legislature accepted in 1869; Tippecanoe County had won the war for the new agricultural college and the state legislature passed an act to establish Purdue University. The Board of Trustees held the power to determine the exact location of the new university. Although John Purdue first recommended Battle Ground, a town just north of Lafayette, when making his large donation to the school's fund, he later suggested Lafayette, which the Board accepted.²⁵ For a sense of perspective, Indiana was the twenty-first state to accept (out of thirty-seven states that existed in 1869) funds provided by the Morrill Act and the twenty-fourth to choose a location for a land-grant campus, and, in the end, Purdue University was the thirtieth land-grant university established in the United States. A string of changes in university leadership followed Purdue's drawn-out founding impeded its growth in the university's

²⁴ Topping, *A Century and Beyond*, 22-25.

²⁵ John Purdue required a position as a lifetime member of Board of Trustees for the university that would bear his name, as a stipulation of his large donation. Topping, *A Century and Beyond*, 28.

early years. This unsteady beginning along with low enrollment rates left Purdue as an institution of higher learning with little credibility in Indiana.²⁶

Purdue administrators expected at least two hundred students for the fall opening in 1874, but just thirty-nine young men, almost all from Lafayette High School, arrived to take entrance examinations. Eight young women, all from the Lafayette area, were rejected for admission to Purdue, whose administration had decided to open the university to male students only. Many land-grant colleges and universities admitted women simply for the sake of financial survival through higher enrollment numbers. Without any female students, Purdue got off to a rough start in terms of matriculation rates.²⁷ The state's conservative approach proved unsuccessful, so in its second year, Purdue admitted women with "no distinction in examinations, expense or classes," meaning that women and men would be judged equally in admittance exams, be offered the same course options, and pay the same amount to attend Purdue.²⁸ While nine women were accepted to begin at Purdue in the fall of 1875, only one was qualified for collegiate study; the other eight must have been relegated to the Preparatory School, a program young men and women could enter before enrolling in college-level courses if their high school education was not up to Purdue standards. Although Emerson E. White, president of Purdue from 1876 through 1883, opposed women's presence in the collegiate world, female students continued to enroll.²⁹ In 1878, Eulora J. Miller became the first woman to graduate from Purdue University.³⁰

²⁶ Topping, *A Century and Beyond*, 32, 74, 81; Purdue University timeline (accessed 3.23.2011).

²⁷ Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 5.

²⁸ Topping, *A Century and Beyond*, 88.

²⁹ Topping, *A Century and Beyond*, 88-89.

³⁰ Purdue University timeline (accessed 3.23.2011)

White, whom students disliked because of his opinions on what aspects of student life belonged at the university, was eventually forced to retire from the presidency after the Purdue community learned of his plan to keep “secret societies,” or fraternities, off the campus. James H. Smart was hired in 1883 to replace White and remained president until his death on February 21, 1900. Topping explains that White had the vision for a great university, but that it was Smart who had the inspiration to actually make Purdue such an institution. Under President White’s leadership, Purdue had developed into a financially viable institution and grew into a legitimate place of learning.³¹ White became well known for helping the university to grow physically as well as financially; Purdue’s enrollment doubled twice during his tenure.³² While Purdue often struggled to remain open during its first fifteen years, White’s hard work in the early 1880s provided for Purdue’s golden age in the 1890s. Winthrop E. Stone replaced Smart after his death in 1900. During his tenure, Stone approved the development of a Department of Home Economics, which, in the end, had a great effect on the academic choices available to women at Purdue.³³

Purdue University provided several programs of study for its students. Some programs were more vocational, such as the two-year and four-year pharmacy program and the Winter Agricultural Short Course, which, appropriately, took place during the winter months and was specifically designed for those who could not devote their time to academic pursuits during the growing season. Men and women who sought to attend Purdue for a full school term or longer could enroll as regular or irregular students. Irregular students, sometimes called “special students,” were today’s equivalent of non-

³¹ Topping, *A Century and Beyond*, 112.

³² Topping, *A Century and Beyond*, 119.

³³ Purdue University timeline (accessed 3.23.2011)

degree seeking students. They studied whatever they wanted and for however long they wanted. Regular students enrolled in classes with the intention to study for four years and receive a degree. There were multiple Schools of Engineering, a School of Agriculture, and a School of Science. The School of Science hosted the departments of mathematics, literature, German, French, English, biology, chemistry, physics, industrial art, and, eventually, education and home economics. All courses of study were technically open to both men and women (save home economics, which took only women), but certain programs and courses of study became either male- or female-dominated.

Home Economics as a Field of Study

With the publication of *The American Woman's Home* in 1869, Catherine Beecher became one of the first and most famous advocates for the professionalization of homemaking. Beecher believed women could not successfully fill their role as housekeepers without training, a viewpoint that might have lacked support had it not been for an era of professional specialization that arose after the end of the Civil War.³⁴ Beecher considered the study of her book, which she wrote based on personal experience rather than training, education enough for a woman to consider herself a “professional within the home.” Still, her ideas on the professionalism of household arts and women’s education led the way for home economics programs at the college and university level.³⁵

³⁴ Megan J. Elias, *Stir It Up: Home Economics in American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 4.

³⁵ Elias, *Stir It Up*, 4-6. Emma Seifrit Weigley, “It Might Have Been Euthenics: The Lake Placid Conferences and the Home Economics Movement” *American Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (March 1974): 79-80.

Ellen Swallow Richards, mother of the home economics movement, brought science to homemaking at the turn of the twentieth century. She hoped home economics would come to be known as “euthenics,” a less sinister sister to eugenics, and, therefore, gain the status of a reputable field of science. As historian of home economics Megan J. Elias clarifies, “where eugenics bred the perfect individual, euthenics would supply the ideal environment.” Richards’ terminology never gained the momentum needed to replace “home economics,” which was chosen as the field’s official name by a committee of the first Lake Placid Conference on Home Economics in 1899. Still, she maintained the central aim proving that scientific research could solve social problems, including “the drudgery of the housewife.”³⁶

Home economists most often named “drudgery” as their main opponent. They hoped that if they could make women’s work less of a burden and link it to scientific study, that “society at large would recognize its value” and see it as an intellectual equal to the work that men were doing outside of the home, such as practicing law, medicine, or business. As Elias explains, “in attempting to change not only processes but also attitudes toward processes, home economists wanted to free women from the stigma of women’s work.” In order for home economics to reach its fullest academic potential, proponents of home economics needed to convince colleges and universities that the subject belonged in course catalogs along with physics, chemistry, and biology.³⁷

During the Fourth Lake Placid Conference on Home Economics in 1903, attendees discussed their hope that home economics would find a place in higher education because of the curricular elasticity found at many colleges and universities at

³⁶ Elias, *Stir It Up*, 11.

³⁷ Elias, *Stir It Up*, 8, 12.

this time.³⁸ With the popularity of attending college rising among middle-class Americans, institutions of higher education across the nation worked to alter the definition of a liberal education, which came to include the option of elective courses, the addition of more “useful” subjects of study, and a decreased focus on the classics.³⁹

Before becoming part of the college-level curriculum, home economics-type courses had been commonly found at urban cooking schools, like today’s technical schools, for women. In 1871, Iowa State University was the first to offer a course in domestic economy, which had been developed by the President Adonijah Welch’s wife, Mary Beaumont Welch.⁴⁰ Other land-grant universities across the nation, which were public, free to attend, and most often co-educational, followed suit. Home economics offered a practical education for women who were often, in some form, shut out from engineering and agricultural programs; however, quite a few colleges and universities did not welcome the new field of study. Some female academics, especially those working at private women’s colleges, believed programs in home economics were a step back into the kitchen and away from the academic world for which they had fought hard to enter. For many of these critics, home economics was a “skill set, not a field of study...that could be picked up quickly outside of college,” and, therefore, not a suitable subject for rigorous academic study.⁴¹ As tens of thousands of women helped fill college and university campuses, those institutions questioned what women should study and

³⁸ Elias, *Stir It Up*, 10.

³⁹ Daniel A. Clark, *Creating the College Man: American Mass Magazines and Middle-Class Manhood, 1890-1915* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 66.

⁴⁰ Virginia B. Vincenti, “Chronology of Events and Movements Which Have Defined and Shaped Home Economics,” in *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, eds. Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 321; “Twentieth Century Women at Iowa State,” <http://www.lib.iastate.edu/spcl/exhibits/20thWomen/isuhist.html> (accessed 5/14/2013).

⁴¹ Elias, *Stir It Up*, 15-16.

answered with everything from watered-down ladies' courses to home economics departments to leaving them to study along side men.

Scope

In 1890, about fifty-six thousand women were enrolled in institutions of higher learning and represented almost thirty-six percent of all college and university students in the United States.⁴² At Purdue, during the 1890-1891 term, female students accounted for almost seventeen percent (fifty-one of thirty-four hundred undergraduates) of the student population. By 1910, about one hundred forty thousand women were enrolled in colleges and universities across the United States, and they made up nearly forty percent of Americans seeking degrees.⁴³ At Purdue, as years had passed, the ratio of female-to-male students declined, in contrast to the rest of the nation. Just three percent (56 of 1,630 undergraduates) of Purdue students were women during the 1909-1910 term (See Appendix I). With its beginnings as a male-only university, it remains difficult to argue that Purdue University welcomed female students with open arms. This lack of friendliness towards female students does not completely explain the low matriculation numbers of women at the university. The local farming community, which Purdue administration expected to contribute significantly to matriculation numbers, viewed the practical, as well as liberal, education being offered to its children – male or female – as suspicious, which it showed by not sending its children to the university.

While the women's colleges, especially those in the Northeast, have been well studied by historians, the majority of women did not attend such institutions of higher

⁴² Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 63.

⁴³ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 63.

learning. In 1890, less than thirty percent of American women enrolled in institutions of higher learning were enrolled in women's colleges. By 1910, this rate had dropped to less than twenty-five percent and continued to decrease over time.⁴⁴ While women had the opportunity to attend private, co-educational institutions, as well as public universities that did not receive Morrill Act funds, land-grants were often the best option for women who lived in states where few other institutions of higher learning had been yet founded. In the case of Indiana, which had numerous choices when it came to private colleges, Purdue would prove a valuable resource to those who had little to no money to spend on tuition or those who lived in the area.

This project covers the years 1887-1913 for a number of reasons. Although Purdue University opened its doors in the fall of 1874, it failed to gain credibility as an institution of higher education for many years. Matriculation remained low and many entering students were unqualified for college-level study until the presidency of James H. Smart between the years 1883 and 1900.⁴⁵ In terms of practical matters, Purdue began publishing its school newspaper, *The Purdue Exponent*, in December 1889, and the first edition of *The Debris*, Purdue's yearbook, also came out that year. My research depends on the *Debris*, while the *Exponent* is a very important supplemental resource because students wrote for both publications. For these reasons, the turn of the twentieth century represented a time period for which there were substantive records and a sufficient number of female students to study.

⁴⁴ Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 7.

⁴⁵ Robert M. Taylor, Jr., Errol Wayne Stevens, Mary Anne Ponder, and Paul Brockman, *Indiana: A New Historical Guide* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1989), 486.

Because of the focus on home economics in Chapter Two, the timespan of this study was based on two home economics-related milestones. In the fall 1887, Purdue University created its first home economics program. This program failed at the time because Indiana was not ready for such a field of study. In the following quarter of a century, Indianan society changed such that on January 17, 1913, a group of passionate, influential individuals founded the Indiana Home Economics Association and held its first meeting on Purdue's campus. Virginia Claypool Meredith, Purdue's first female on the Board of Trustees and active participant in the Indiana Farmer's Institutes, became the founding president. Her adopted daughter, Mary Mathews, who became the founding dean for the School of Home Economics at Purdue in 1926, sat on the executive committee.⁴⁶ Even as home economics became recognized as a legitimate field of study by the mainstream, contemporary historians argue that the field received little respect from the academe.

Historiography

Andrea Radke-Moss makes domestic science her primary topic of discussion in her chapter on women's coursework in *Bright Epoch: Women and Coeducation in the American West* (2008), a book which analyzes coeducation on the campuses of land-grant schools in the far Midwest and West: the Iowa Agricultural College, the University of Nebraska, the Utah Agricultural College, and the Oregon Agricultural College. Although Radke-Moss addresses the debate among women's historians over whether home economics helped or hindered women educationally, professionally, and socially and

⁴⁶ Frederick Whitford, Andrew G. Martin, and Phyllis Mattheis, *The Queen of American Agriculture: Biography of Virginia Claypool Meredith* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 233-234.

whether women were shepherded into domestic studies to keep them away from male-dominated fields, she never explicitly takes a stance; however, one might infer she believes women were making their own choices about what to study based on the anecdotes and quotations from female college students she chooses to share with her readers.

Radke-Moss spends much of her chapter on curricula analyzing the inconsistent nature of women's course work at land-grant universities. While the size of the American middle class grew greatly at the turn of the twentieth century, it lacked homogeneity; great differences abounded between the lower middle class and the bourgeoisie. Women of the lower middle class might have worked on their family's farm or worked as milliners or seamstresses; however, women of the upper middle class, including wealthier farm wives, did not work with their hands, and they often hired servants to perform physical labor, like cleaning and laundry. Still, whether a white, native-born woman was from an upper- or lower-middle-class family, she had to live up to the same expectation of "genteel refinement and proper behavior, including social etiquette, morality, material culture, and education."⁴⁷ While land-grant universities strove to provide a practical education, as time passed they aspired to rise above the stigma of being able to provide only agricultural and industrial instruction. These ambitions created a contradiction that more often than not affected women; land-grant universities seemed to expect their female students to be finished ladies *and* future farm wives by the time of graduation.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Andrea G. Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch: Women and Coeducation in the American West* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 152.

⁴⁸ Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 152-153.

Like Radke-Moss, Barbara Solomon discusses women's curriculum at the turn of the twentieth century in terms of home economics in *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (1985). Solomon explains that in the 1880s, domestic science had meant "a step backward into the kitchen," while by the 1900s, it had become a solidly academic subject of study.⁴⁹ A degree in home economics provided many professional opportunities, including work as professors, nutritionists, and extension workers.

Solomon also argues, as does Radke-Moss, that educators disagreed about what women should learn and what they should do with their education once they graduated.⁵⁰ While men used a liberal arts degree to enter a profession, such as business, politics, or law, many questioned what a woman would do with such a degree, especially if only marriage and childrearing laid in her future. According to Solomon, "educators of women invoked the old seminary precept that liberal education would enable women to deal with any circumstances that life brought forth but was not intended to train them for any particular situation," a philosophy that was clearly in play at Purdue University until the formation of the Home Economics Department in 1905.⁵¹

The founding of Department of Home Economics provided an academic outlet for women previously uninterested in any of the other courses of study available at Purdue and created more opportunities for women to receive a college education without having to face scrutiny from her family or community. *Stir It Up: Home Economics in American*

⁴⁹ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 85.

⁵⁰ She bases this dichotomy partly on her "three generation" framework where, "the fact that they aimed to meet the needs of different segments of the college population" caused educators to be inconsistent with their ideas about the education of women, meaning the first generation (enrolling between the years 1860s-1889) of serious students and the more frivolous students of the following generations (1890-1910 and 1911-1920s).

⁵¹ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 83, 85-86.

Culture by Megan J. Elias contributes the only book-length study that focuses on home economics in the American educational system. In *“Just a Housewife”*: *The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America*, Glenna Matthews explores how women went from being an essential part of her family and society in 1850 to “just a housewife” over the course of one hundred years. Both Elias and Matthews argue that both historians and everyday people have unfairly degraded both home economics as a field of study and domestic life over the past several decades.⁵² In her dissertation, “The Rise and Fall of Home Economics: A Study with Implications for Women, Education, and Change,” Linda Marie Fritschner looks at the field of home economics as a sociologist. Fritschner argues that the home economics movement within the educational system functioned as reaction to a threat felt by middle-class, native whites as their way of life as the United States changed from a rural to urban and industrialized society.⁵³ Ryan K. Anderson expresses a similar sentiment when he discusses the formation of the Department of Home Economics at Purdue in ““The Law of College Customs is [as] Inexorable as the Laws of Chemistry and Physics’: The Transition to a Modern Purdue University, 1900-1924.” Anderson considers the formation of the home economics department in 1905 as part of President Stone’s restrictive plan for female education. According to Anderson, Stone had a desire to “train progressive housewives for Indiana’s male farmers.”⁵⁴

While all of these works are highly significant in the study of the higher education of women at the turn of the twentieth century, they fail to discuss in depth what women

⁵² Glenna Matthews, *“Just a Housewife”*: *The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), xiii.

⁵³ Linda Marie Fritschner, “The Rise and Fall of Home Economics: A Study with Implications for Women, Education, and Change” (PhD diss., University of California, Davis, 1973), ii.

⁵⁴ Ryan K. Anderson, ““The Law of College Customs is [as] Inexorable as the Laws of Chemistry and Physics’: The Transition to a Modern Purdue University, 1900-1924,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 99, no. 2 (June 2003): 106.

were studying during this time. Although women across the nation, and even at Purdue, attended college to seek a good time or a husband rather than graduation, subjects of study once closed to women opened up as time passed allowing women at Purdue, who were more academically inclined, to pursue a degree. The existing literature addresses colleges and universities that share characteristics with Purdue University, but none thoroughly cover, or even mention, any land-grant universities in the Old Northwest (Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin). The academic choices of young women at the turn of the twentieth century illustrate the expectations of the communities to which they belonged, in most cases middle-class, Indianan, and/or farming.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One covers life at Purdue University between 1887 and 1913 to analyze the female student body during these years. The *Purdue University Annual Registers*, or course catalogs, provide statistical data about how many women attended Purdue, what these women studied, and where they were from. The *Registers* also provide information about required course work in the University's Schools of Agriculture, Science, and Engineering. The *Debris*, Purdue's yearbook, offered information on the goings on in each school; the source is particularly useful to demonstrate how their male peers, the yearbook staff, depicted female students. In this chapter, the difference between regular undergraduate and irregular students, both of whom studied at the collegiate level, becomes clear.

Chapter Two takes a closer look at the Department of Home Economics and its founding in 1905, which took place fairly late considering Purdue's status as a Morrill

Land-Grant Act university. In the summer of 1901, with the construction of a new agricultural building on Purdue University's growing campus, Professor William C. Latta began his fight with President Winthrop E. Stone for a home economics department within the School of Agriculture. Previously, the School of Domestic Economy operating as a façade for a cooking program, had failed after two years (having begun in the fall of 1887 and ended in the spring of 1889), and Purdue's administrators were reluctant to create a new department based on practical study, when most female Purdue students studied industrial arts, such as wood carving and china painting, and French. Using university publications as well as the personal papers of Latta, this chapter seeks to more fully uncover the roundabout development of Purdue University's Department of Home Economics, which eventually opened in the School of Science with Stone's full support. While historians have historically viewed the field of home economics as a tool to keep women out of academia, Purdue's failure to found such a program, as they were rising in popularity across the nation, indicates the desire for male professors and administrators to exclude women. Similarly, the late founding of the home economics department illustrates how Indianan society saw its young college women at the turn of the twentieth century, that they need study only subjects like art and foreign languages – if anything at all – and that any training that might prepare them for a career or life as a housewife and mother was unnecessary.

Chapter One – “The Girl Must be Educated”: The Academic Lives of Female Purdue Students

At the turn of the twentieth century, many types of female students attended Purdue University: graduate, regular undergraduate, preparatory, irregular, pharmacy, winter agricultural, and, eventually, medical. Most female Purdue students, especially the regular and irregular, came from Tippecanoe County. Women studying pharmacy or those enrolled in the Winter Agricultural Short Course more often traveled from further away to attend Purdue. This study focuses on the regularly enrolled undergraduates and irregular students. Between the fall of 1887 and the spring of 1913, Purdue enrolled close to seventeen hundred women at the undergraduate level and about ten times as many men. As Purdue’s course catalogs show, nearly all regular female undergraduates between 1887 and 1913 enrolled in the School of Science. The School of Science essentially existed as a catchall for subjects of study that were neither in The School of Agriculture nor Engineering. History, chemistry, biology, industrial art, literature, English, French, German, mathematics, and, later, education and home economics, all fell under the School of Science making it nearly impossible to discern what subject of study each female student focused on while attending Purdue; however, because irregular students’ names are listed along with their subject(s) of study, one can infer the academic choices of some female students in Indiana at the turn of the twentieth century.

While determining the academic focus of most female students proves difficult, for some it does not, such as women enrolled in the Agricultural Winter Short Course.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Another group of female students considered separately from the mainstream of female undergraduates were those who enrolled in the School of Pharmacy. Purdue University founded its School of Pharmacy in 1884 and established a two-year pharmacy program, which a handful of women graduated from and

The Winter Agricultural Short Course took place over the course of just eight weeks, and as the name states, focused on just agricultural subjects. The program ran during the winter because that was when farmers or farmers' wives as well as those interested in becoming such were available to attend school; during the other seasons, they were occupied with work on their or family farms. The list of Winter Short Course students appeared for the first time in the 1891-1892 *Annual Register*, and women began participating in the program in the 1898-1899 term. Purdue advertised the Winter Short Course for those "who need further preparation for the successful pursuit of some branch of agriculture, but who can attend the University only during the winter months." During the abridged agricultural course of study, students devoted their time to the study of agriculture and horticulture, animal husbandry, dairy and creamery, and, in some years, home economics courses were available just for women.⁵⁶

With the exception of one term, 1899-1900, women made up, on average, about five percent of the students enrolled in the winter agricultural program each year between 1898 and 1910. Before this time period, women had not enrolled in the Winter Short Course, and after this period, the number of women enrolling in the program increased just as it did for regular undergraduates. Out of over fifty women enrolled between 1898

became qualified as pharmaceutical chemists with a degree of "Graduate in Pharmacy."⁵⁵ Between 1887 and 1913, at least one woman was enrolled, along with tens of men, in this course of study except between the fall of 1896 and the spring of 1900. The School of Pharmacy provided courses in botany, chemistry, and material medica, more popularly known today as pharmacology, among others, and had a heavy focus on laboratory study; each of the two terms needed to complete these programs lasted just six months.⁵⁵ In 1906, Purdue began providing a four-year pharmacy program along with the two-year track, but no female student had graduated from the four-year course of study by 1910, and nearly all female pharmacy students continued to enroll in the two-year program and graduated. Although undergraduates themselves, students matriculating in the School of Pharmacy were listed, in the *Annual Registers*, separately from the rest of the undergraduates who were working toward a bachelor's degree in the Schools of Science, Agriculture, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and, later, Chemical Engineering (first appearing in the 1907-1908 *Annual Register*), so they are considered separate from the other undergraduates who are examined in this study and will not be expanded upon.

⁵⁶ *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1907-1908*, 58.

and 1910, only seven ever returned for a second or third winter course, and three went on to different kinds of study: one as an irregular student of botany and chemistry for two years, one as a two-year pharmacy student who did not finish the program within the years of this study, and one who graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree. Women who believed they had more than a few months or a couple of years to devote to their college education enrolled as regular students.

Between the 1887-1888 and 1912-1913 school terms, nearly twelve hundred women came to Purdue as regular undergraduate students. During these years, women were, at the highest, just under seventeen percent of the undergraduate student body (during the 1890-1891 term) and, at the lowest, just under two percent (during the 1907-1908 term). In comparison, nationally, women made up 35.9 percent of all people enrolled in institutions of higher education in 1890, 36.8 percent in 1900 and 39.6 percent in 1910.⁵⁷ While the total population of Purdue students skyrocketed, the number of female students remained constant, as the number of male students increased steadily. During the 1887-1888 term, women made up nearly twenty one percent of the regular student population at Purdue, thirty-seven out of less than one hundred eighty students, but during the 1912-1913 term, women made up only seven percent of the regular student body (See Appendix I).⁵⁸

As a comparison, female students at the University of Illinois, Illinois' land-grant university, and Michigan State College (later renamed Michigan State University),

⁵⁷ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 63.

⁵⁸ The large ratio of female seniors in the 1890-1891 term is an outlier in this study. It is likely more representative of the ratio of female-to-male students for the first fifteen years of operation for Purdue University; however, the proportion of female-to-male students at Purdue between 1887 and 1910 did decrease fairly steadily. Still there is little consistency in the numbers of female students enrolled at Purdue each year. Female seniors might number fourteen one year, five the next, and eleven the following as they did in the case of the 1902-1903 through the 1904-1905 terms.

Michigan's land-grant university, made up fourteen to twenty-seven percent of students during this time period, far greater than the proportion of female students at Purdue.⁵⁹ Between 1887 and 1913, the ratio of female-to-male students at Purdue reached both its peak and its lowest point. In the 1909 to 1910 term, women made up just three percent of regular students, but after that, the number of female students began to increase rapidly, and so the percent of students at Purdue increased as well. During the 1910-1911 term, women made up four percent of the student population, six percent during the 1911-1912 term, and seven percent during the 1912 -1913 term.

Over half of female Purdue undergraduates between 1887 and 1913 grew up in Lafayette or West Lafayette and even more came from the smaller neighboring towns of Battle Ground, Frankfort, Dayton, and Shadeland. In the earlier years covered by this study, nearly all female Purdue students came from Tippecanoe County, especially Lafayette and West Lafayette; however, towards the end of the study, women came to Purdue from farther distances (See Appendix II). This demographic shift was true for the male students as well, but men came to Purdue from more cities, more states, and more countries earlier than women did. In 1903, Purdue had male and female students from ninety-one of its ninety-two counties, an all-time high. Similarly, students came from thirty-three states, excluding Indiana, and from abroad representing Cuba, the Philippine Islands, Bulgaria, England, Japan, Mexico, and Canada.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Michigan State University Historical Enrollments and Term End Reports, "Summery of Students," 1898, 1903, 1908, 1913, <http://www.reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/EnrollmentTermEnd.asp> (accessed April 12, 2013); University of Illinois Student Enrollment Statistics, "Summer of Students," 1889, 1896, 1903, 1908, 1913, <http://archives.library.illinois.edu/e-records/index.php?dir=University%20Archives/2503810/> (accessed April 12, 2013).

⁶⁰ *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1903-1904*, 234.

Ladies' Hall, the on-campus women's dormitory, housed only twenty women each year, and while women were allowed to rent rooms in reputable boarding-houses in town, parents at this time would have preferred their daughters to stay with family in the area if available.⁶¹ With a university built in their hometown, the women of Lafayette and West Lafayette attended in greater numbers than those from other Indiana towns and cities because they could most easily maintain a socially acceptable living arrangement while enrolled at Purdue. As going to college became more widely accepted, more women came to Purdue from further away as shown in *Annual Registers* for the 1908-1909 term and beyond.

The process of determining what women studied at the turn of the twentieth century once they arrived at Purdue University proved more difficult than anticipated. Because the *Annual Registers* list only the school in which each student was enrolled, it is impossible to say with absolute certainty what subjects each woman focused on and, therefore, difficult to say what women studied at Purdue. The question of what women studied at Purdue must be answered creatively by looking to the titles of undergraduate theses, *Annual Registers* printed prior to 1890, and the focus of study chosen by female irregular students.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Purdue undergraduates could enroll in the School of Science, the School of Agriculture, and the Schools of Electrical, Civil, and Mechanical Engineering, with the School of Chemical Engineering added in the fall of 1906. Only a small number of women, around ten, enrolled as regular students outside the School of Science between 1887 and 1913. Four of these women enrolled in the School of Agriculture and remained there just for their freshman year (three left Purdue

⁶¹ *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1893-1894*, p. 68; Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 56.

completely after their first year and one transferred to the School of Science for her second year and then left Purdue entirely); one enrolled in the School of Chemical Engineering and lasted two years; one woman graduated from the School of Electrical Engineering and another two made it to their sophomore and junior years.⁶²

Purdue University never had an independent School of Art during the years researched or prior. Like many other subjects of study it existed within the School of Science; however, in years before 1890, *Annual Registers* differentiated between students of industrial art and the rest of those enrolled in the School of Science. An analysis of student registers, which, for most of the years examined, listed the names, school of enrollment, home town, and local address of each student, for these years show that most female students at Purdue studied art, with a few pursuing “science,” which could mean literature, history, English, mathematics, and modern languages, as well as chemistry and biology. This figure parallels the popularity of industrial art among irregular students, whose focus of study the *Annual Registers* lists between the years 1887 and 1913. This congruence leads to a conclusion that the majority of female Purdue students studied art, and this view likely proves true when combining regular undergraduates with irregular students; however, a variation lies among the women who actually graduated with bachelor’s degrees.⁶³

Like college goes today, students at Purdue University regularly left college before finishing the work necessary to receive a degree. Both men and women at Purdue left academic life at the turn of the twentieth century, but with different levels of consistency and impact. A class of students generally lost about ten to twenty percent of

⁶² “Register of Students,” *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1887-1888 through 1912-1913*.

⁶³ *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1882-1883*, 1-11.

its male students term-to-term between freshman year and graduation, sometimes less (four percent) and never more than thirty-four percent. For example, the men who were freshman during the 1900-1901 school year lost nine percent of their classmates by the start of their sophomore year, an additional sixteen percent by junior year and another twenty-one percent by senior year. The percentage of lost students did not always increase as terms passed; Purdue classes lost male students every year. Because there were so few female students at Purdue at this time, the loss and gain of female students almost always had a huge impact on the size of the female population on campus; also, female students never left their studies at the consistent rates that men did between 1887 and 1913. Female students, on average, made up about six percent of the enrolled undergraduates across the twenty-five years this study spans.⁶⁴

Unlike male matriculation numbers, female enrollment at times increased from year-to-year. For example in fall of 1893, thirteen women enrolled as freshmen at Purdue; six women, or fifty-six percent, did not make it to their sophomore year; six more, or eighty-six percent of the remaining class, left Purdue before their junior year, but two women joined the remaining student for her senior year, increasing the female population by an illusionary three hundred percent. In one case, a woman, Eva Leonore Linn, enrolled, left, and returned, possibly to work and save money to finish out her studies, which was not uncommon nationwide but rarely occurred at Purdue. In the second case, the *Annual Registers* never listed the woman, Emma Doan, before her senior year indicating that she may have transferred from another college or university. More commonly, women would enroll as degree-seeking undergraduates after a year or two as an irregular, or special, student. Overall, a group of freshman women had a good chance

⁶⁴ "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1887-1888 through 1912-1913*.

of losing forty to fifty percent of its female peers before their sophomore year began. Women who made it to their junior year usually made it to their senior year. While some historians have found higher persistence rates, the percentage of students who made it from their freshman year to graduation, for female students at other land-grant universities, just over one third of women made it from freshman year to graduation at Purdue between 1887 and 1913.⁶⁵

Of those who did make it to graduation, Purdue University's records of degrees conferred show that women receiving bachelor's degrees preferred literature, history, biology, and chemistry. In 1896, Clara Avesta Cunningham titled her thesis, *Effects of Drought on Certain Native Plants*; her 1897 master's thesis was titled *Bacterial Disease of Sugar Beets*. Sarah Brush Freed wrote *Greek Life as Shown in the Iliad*. Natalia Elizabeth Lahr wrote a thesis on *The Monroe Doctrine*, while her 1897 Master's thesis was titled *Child Life Shown in Riley's "Child World" and Barrie's "Sentimental Tommy."* These three women each received a Bachelor of Science degree from Purdue. Very few theses were written on art or art history topics. It is possible that women who focused on industrial art while at Purdue wrote theses having nothing to do with art, but that is unlikely since theses generally represent a culmination of study. While thesis titles are also helpful in determining exactly what a woman's academic focus was, they are a limited source of information in that only the women who graduated – a fraction of all female undergraduates – actually wrote a thesis. Still, it is important to note that while

⁶⁵ Radke-Moss, Bright Epoch, 292-294; *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1890-1891*, 67-74; *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1891-1892*, 77-87; "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1887-1888 through 1912-1913*.

female students at Purdue most frequently studied industrial art, those who graduated rarely did. These women most often studied history, literature, and science.⁶⁶

The work of female graduate students, who had often completed their undergraduate studies at Purdue, also reflects the tendency to focus on these fields of study. In the 1901-1902 term, of eight women doing post-graduate study, but *not* considered candidates for master's degrees, six were studying industrial art. Of the eight women who were candidates for advanced degrees, none were studying industrial art; they studied history, literature, and English.⁶⁷ While some women preferred courses of study that were otherwise dominated by men, most women favored studying the skills-based subject of industrial art, which focused on drawing (both figure and mechanical drawing were available from which to choose), decorative design, woodcarving, and china painting. The enrollment in such courses indicates that women were not expected by their family, community, or the university to push themselves academically and to engage in the same subjects of study as their male peers. Without the pressure of having to support oneself financially after graduation, many of these students were free to study whatever they wanted or what their parents wanted for them.

China painting and collecting garnered huge popularity in the United States in the late nineteenth century, so some might reasonably argue that a degree in industrial art could be beneficial for a young woman in the same way that a degree in English could help a woman who planned to become a teacher after graduation. Like teaching, china painting made the list of acceptable career choices for women. In fact, art schools and art magazines promoted careers in china painting as a woman's route to self-sufficiency.

⁶⁶ "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1887-1888 through 1912-1913*.

⁶⁷ *The Debris*, 1902, p. 45-48, The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette IN.

Unfortunately, the reality of the situation proved far less lucrative. As Cynthia A. Brandimarte explains, in her article, “Somebody’s Aunt and Nobody’s Mother: The American China Painter and Her Work, 1870-1920,” men were considered the real artists when it came to china painting. They were the “professionals,” while women were generally considered, and almost always identified as, “amateurs.”⁶⁸

The popularity of china painting came to the United States by way of Europe where it had become a common leisure activity for titled women. Upper-class American women began the trend in the United States, and those of the middle-class followed suit. Women could buy unpainted china and decorate it themselves to keep in their homes or give away as gifts. Overall, china painting proved better suited as a hobby rather than career choice. Similar to the experiences of women in the field of teaching, female china painters could expect lower pay than their male peers. While male china painters could expect to bring in \$18.50 a week in 1900, female china painters made just \$7.50 per week. On average, a woman made slightly less than four hundred dollars a year as a china painter, while the average middle-class American male made between six and seven hundred dollars annually.⁶⁹ Female china painters, like teachers would find it difficult, if not impossible, to live independently on their own salary. As John L. Rury points out in “Gender, Salaries and Careers: American Teachers, 1900-1910,” “only the most experienced teachers...could afford to establish households in this period.”⁷⁰

Younger teachers, who were less experienced, lived at home with their parents and most

⁶⁸ Cynthia A. Brandimarte “Somebody’s Aunt and Nobody’s Mother: The American China Painter and Her Work 1870-1920,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 23, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 204.

⁶⁹ Brandimarte “Somebody’s Aunt and Nobody’s Mother,” 208, 217, 218.

⁷⁰ John L. Rury, “Gender, Salaries and Career: American Teachers, 1900-1910,” *Issues in Education* 4, no. 3 (Winter 1986): 227.

“taught only as a way of supplementing parents’ income until marriage.”⁷¹ Teaching, and other jobs women held during this time period, were often seen as an “interim between dependency upon their parents and their future husbands.”⁷² There is no doubt that some women were able to make a life-long career out of china painting, but the occasions were rare. While women enrolled in industrial art courses at Purdue at the turn of the twentieth century may have had ambitions of becoming a professional china painters, based on their low graduation rates, it is far more likely that they were simply at Purdue to practice their skills as hobbyists.

While thesis titles and school classifications in course catalogs prior to 1890 help illustrate the academic landscape of female students at Purdue, so, too, does the list of irregular students in the student registers published in the *Annual Register*. Nearly all irregular students at Purdue between 1887 and 1913 were women.⁷³ Irregular students could do work at the undergraduate level, and most did; however, some studied as post-graduates who wanted “to pursue special lines of study or investigation for a limited period of time” and were “not candidates for an advanced degree.”⁷⁴ Those who were at least nineteen years old could apply to the Committee on Special Students with a plan of

⁷¹ Rury, “Gender, Salaries and Career,” 223.

⁷² Rury, “Gender, Salaries and Career,” 223-224.

⁷³ There was always at least one male irregular student between the years 1887 and 1913. Male irregular students generally studied subjects like mathematics or chemistry. One of the reasons for low male irregular enrollment was that special studies in any of the engineering schools at Purdue was discouraged. The 1906-1907 *Annual Register* explained that because the courses in the schools of engineering were highly specialized and the demands of the regular students were so high, the university rarely accepted irregular engineering students. In earlier years, there were more male irregular students, many of which studied art, but this fell out of fashion before 1890. “Register of Students,” *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1890-1891 through 1912-1913*.

⁷⁴ *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1906-1907*, 110.

study and could remain to study whatever they chose so long as their work was considered satisfactory.⁷⁵

Eighty percent of female irregular students attending between 1887 and 1913 lived locally in Lafayette or West Lafayette, and quite a few, nearly twenty percent, were listed by their married, or husband's, name. When available, census records showed a good number, eight out of twenty-three, or thirty-five percent, of female irregular students were already married in the years 1890, 1900, and 1910, often to Purdue professors.⁷⁶ These factors, along with the predominance in the study of industrial art subjects, like woodcarving and china painting, make it easy to imagine that being an irregular student at Purdue was seen by female students as more of a recreational activity and an opportunity to get outside of their homes, rather than as a purely academic one. Female students who had, arguably, come to Purdue for a more practical course of study with specific career goals in mind, such as the winter agriculture students and those in the two-year pharmacy course, were rarely locals. These students had an academic mission. For those who did not have such aims, there was less benefit to traveling far for an education, which may explain why so many irregular students were locals.⁷⁷

Almost all female irregular students studied at the undergraduate level and would receive a certificate for the work they had done while at Purdue. Between 1887 and 1913, there were about five hundred female irregular students at Purdue. Intersections existed between regular and irregular students; forty-one of these women had been

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ While the 1880 U.S. Federal Census provides the occupations of the parents of Purdue students who attended Purdue during 1890, it is not a reliable source to determine marital status of students at their time of enrollment, as all of them were small children at this time. "Index to the 1880 United States Federal Census," <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed 10/9/2012; "Index to the 1900 United States Federal Census," <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed 10/6/2012; "Index to the 1910 United States Federal Census," <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed 10/6/2012. See Appendix II.

⁷⁷ "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1887-1888 through 1912-1913*.

regular undergraduates at Purdue before, or became one after being an irregular student. For example, Elizabeth Grace Pitman suddenly became a senior in the 1893-1894 term after spending two years as an irregular student; the first was spent studying mathematics, chemistry, botany, and German; the second focused on literature, language, mathematics, and natural science. Margaret (found in the Register of Students as Mrs. Charles M.) Snyder came back to Purdue as an irregular student in 1894 after she received her Bachelor of Science degree from Purdue in 1886; she was pursuing post-graduate work without actually being enrolled as a candidate for a Master's of Science.⁷⁸

While the *Annual Registers* stated that the “[f]aculty will...prescribe the minimum amount of time to be spent in such work,” indicating a certain level of consistency in the amount of time a person might be an irregular student, in reality no uniformity existed. One might spend one year enrolled in multiple subjects or spend multiple years to focus on one field of study. So far, no sources indicated the benefits of attending Purdue as an irregular student rather than a regular one. Clearly it was less of a commitment up front, but enrolling as a regular student did not require or necessarily result in four years of study and then graduation. It is likely that irregular students had fewer mandatory courses and were allowed more flexibility in their studies, which many women apparently found ideal. Why not take whatever classes desired when hardly anyone in your circle of society expected you to get a degree? Most female, irregular students studied at Purdue for just one year, some for two or three, but one woman, Belle R. (Mrs. George C.) Spitzer spent seven, nearly consecutive years as an irregular student

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

of art; clearly she could have devoted herself to a four-year program, and even a graduate program to follow, but chose against it, possibly for societal reasons.⁷⁹

Female irregular students by far favored industrial art as their subject of study with French in second place; however, they also studied history, German, botany, literature, English, music, mathematics, chemistry, and biology. The few women who taught at Purdue held places among the faculty in the departments of English, French, and industrial art, so it is unsurprising that women often chose these focuses of study, as male professors could be hostile towards female students. Some women who were irregular students for multiple years changed their focus of study throughout their time at Purdue.⁸⁰ For example, Bertha Barr Crouse studied literature as an irregular student during the 1893-1894 term, left for a year, and returned to study mathematics, once again as an irregular student, during the 1895-1896 term, and eventually graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1898. Crouse's senior thesis, "Some of the Achievements of Women in Mathematics," indicates that she continued her study of mathematics as a second-year irregular student into her senior year as an undergraduate.⁸¹ Between 1887 and 1913, *Annual Registers* did not list the focus of study of regular, undergraduate students, just the school in which they were enrolled. This omission makes it difficult to determine what types of classes regular, undergraduate female students enrolled in because the School of Science was a catch-all for those who studied biology, chemistry,

⁷⁹ "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1891-1892*; "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1892-1893*; "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1894-1895*; "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1895-1896*; "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1898-1899*; "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1899-1900*; "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1900-1901*.

⁸⁰ "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1887-1888 through 1912-1913*.

⁸¹ "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1893-1894*; "Register of Students," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1895-1896*; "Degrees Conferred," *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1898-1999*.

languages, literature, mathematics, history, industrial art, and, later, home economics; however, the subjects taken by the irregular students are listed and are illustrative of what was available and desirable to degree-seeking undergraduates.

The *Purdue Annual Registers* provide a fairly clear illustration of classes offered in the School of Science, the academic home of nearly all female students. As stated previously, the School of Science at Purdue University housed a wide range of subjects of study. An early edition of the *Purdue Annual Register* explains, “The special object of the School of Science is to give a thorough training in biological, chemical, and physical science” and that it includes “as much literary, mathematical, and philosophical work as possible.” In other words, a recent increase in the number of elective subjects meant even more options for students.⁸² During their freshman year, a student in the School of Science took the following courses at minimum: drawing, rhetoric, geometry, algebra, trigonometry, elocution, and French or German. The following year, physics, higher algebra, trigonometry, English literature, history, elocution, and French or German made up the majority of their schedule. Then students could choose from several electives: industrial art, zoology, botany, surveying, and analytical geometry. During their junior year, only general chemistry and literature and history were required, and students made up the rest of their schedules with electives, such as calculus, botany, zoology, physics, industrial art (which included wood carving and the history of architecture), French or German, biology, or more chemistry. Human physiology, geology, psychology, and political economy were required for the senior year with electives similar to those available to juniors. Also, in the junior and senior years of their undergraduate careers, students could choose to focus their academic pursuits on biology, chemistry, industrial

⁸² *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1889-1891*, 40.

art, or literature and history. Also, the Department of Pure Mathematics existed within the School of Science, where students could enroll as soon as their freshman year.⁸³

With the increased popularity of young women attending institutions of higher learning came more discussion of what they should learn and what effect this education would have on them intellectually, physically, and on their desires to marry and have a family. Magazines, such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, often discussed what women could and should study while away at college. The *Ladies' Home Journal* had the highest circulation of any women's magazine at the turn of the twentieth century; Purdue University's library had a subscription by the 1891-1892 term.⁸⁴ In the April 1903 issue, editor Edward Bok argued that colleges and universities should consider home economics a necessary field of study for women. He wrote

The study of history, of art, of Latin, of music – all this opens up to a girl a world which is refreshing, broadening, and will prove, in after years, a resource full of pleasure and comfort to her. But along with these studies must soon be placed, not beneath them, but beside the best of them, the study of domestic science.

While Bok wholeheartedly believed in the benefit of higher learning for women, he also believed that their education should prepare them for their lot in life, to be housewives and mothers. According to Bok, all fields of study other than domestic science were

“less necessary and less vital to ninety out of every hundred girls.” Bok writes,

it makes no difference how scholastic the average girl may be upon her graduation day, how high may be her position in her class, and with what laurels she may be honored, if she be lacking in the womanly instinct...her education is incomplete, and she stands before the world as a woman without the real knowledge that every normal woman should possess.

⁸³ *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1889-1891*, 41. *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1890-1892*, 7.

⁸⁴ Mary Ellen Waller-Zuckerman, ““Old Homes, in a City of Perpetual Change’: Women’s Magazines, 1890-1916” *Business History Review* 63, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 716; *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1891-1893*, 26.

In Bok's eyes, all women, unless disabled in some way, should be well-learned in housewifery, and if she was not, then she was not whole.⁸⁵

Purdue University did not form a Department of Home Economics until the fall of 1905; however, years beforehand, female students still saw their course work at Purdue as preparation for making them better wives and mothers. Despite being dominated by male-centric articles, the *Purdue Exponent*, Purdue's student newspaper, provides some insight into the way women viewed their intellectual capabilities and what they would do with them. Referencing an article published in none other than *Ladies' Home Journal* on the highest ambitions of female college and university students, "A Purdue Girl" wrote, in January 1903, on the bright future of her and her female peers after their stint as coeds.⁸⁶ The Purdue Girl began by noting the unfortunate belief among many Americans that "a college education unfits a girl for women's duties in the home, and makes her more independent and of a masculine nature." From when women first began attending institutions of higher learning through the turn of the twentieth century, as the author states, Americans feared that women would lose all interest in marriage and motherhood during her four years at college. Considering their conservative nature, Indianans likely shared this fear, especially farmers who would want to pass down their land to the next generation.

⁸⁵ Edward Bok, "The College and the Stove" *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1903, 16.

⁸⁶ In "What 100 Girls Would Like to Be" by Helen Hamilton and published in the January 1903 edition of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, Hamilton asked one hundred women enrolled in colleges and universities whether they would prefer to be a man or a woman and what their highest ambition was as a woman. The article is comprised of quotations naming the school in which the young woman attends, as well as a breakdown in numbers of these the greatest ambitions of these women. Some responses were concrete, while others more nebulous. For example, thirty-four of those interviewed wanted to be "wives and mothers"; nine wanted to be "noble, womanly women"; eleven woman wanted to be teachers; one an actress; four writers; one the president of a college; two "useful women"; two "to be independent"; one "to be good"; and three "to leave the world better for having lived in it"; and nine were undecided. Unfortunately, no women from Purdue were quoted in this article.

The Purdue Girl argued that an education from Purdue (which she noted, without much explanation, was slightly different from that of the average college girl) broadened the mind and did not make one “impractical,” that American society was wrong to think that “her thoughts are too far elevated for her to lower herself to do housework.” The Purdue Girl, she insisted, helps out with housework daily if she lives with her family in town and on vacation if she is from further away. The author’s research showed that half of the female graduates up to 1900 were homemakers, and that graduates from thereon are occupied as such or preparing for life as a housewife. While the author ends the article by declaring that higher education does no “harm in making a true, pure, womanly woman,” it remains clear that such a woman would not find herself outside the realm of her home, or possibly the classroom as a teacher; either way, she could count on being occupied in one of two most socially acceptable and feminized fields.⁸⁷

An article published in the February 15, 1900 edition of the *Exponent* similarly illustrates the tendency of female Purdue students focus on more socially acceptable fields of study. Georgiana Lindley tells the story of a train ride home from West Lafayette where she meets a man who is absolutely against co-education. He asks Lindley, “What can a girl do at Purdue?” Her response begins with the courses of study that a woman was least likely to enroll in at Purdue. She responds, “The number of things a girl may do at Purdue is legion. No objections are offered to her studying electrical, civil or mechanical engineering or pharmacy, if she desires.” The man seems unimpressed, so she suggests mathematics, geology, biology, physics, and chemistry. The man showed distress at the idea of women studying any of these subjects. Lindley appeased the man with a comparatively extensive explanation of the opportunities

⁸⁷ A Purdue Girl, “The Future of the Purdue Girl,” *Purdue Exponent*, January 1, 1903, n.p.

provided by Purdue in modern languages, music, art, and literature. While Lindley knew that engineering and science classes are theoretically open to women, she has had no experience with them and is unable to defend them or, more likely, fears upsetting this train passenger with the idea of women studying subjects that he believes belonged to men solely. In the end, the man seemed appeased, even stating that “Purdue must be a pretty fair kind of a place for girls;” however, because he still, “as a rule” was “not in favor of co-educational schools,” his pacification could relate only to what he considers feminine fields of study – literature, French, art, and music. Although Lindley felt proud of her loyalty for Purdue, she proved unable to convince the man of the benefits of co-education. Lindley doubtlessly attended few classes at the side of a man considering the subjects of study she chose to elaborate on when talking to this stranger.⁸⁸

While some at the time may have considered the study of history, literature, or art of little consequence to a young woman’s future, and others thought of the field of home economics as being devoid of intellectual stimulation, many female students considered the opportunities Purdue provided them with as highly important. Not all women saw taking classes as a recreational activity. It would be desirable to understand what women thought about their own academic lives and how their male peers perceived them, along with knowledge of what women studied while at Purdue. Without any personal letters or journals to speak of, such a task proves difficult, but not impossible. The Purdue yearbook, the *Debris*, gives much insight into how male students saw the women with whom they shared a campus.

⁸⁸ As a member of the class of 1901, Lindley enrolled as a regular undergraduate after a year as an irregular student studying Literature, French, and Economics. W Lindley, “What Can a Girl do at Purdue?”; *Purdue*, February 2, 1900, 24-26.

The *Debris*, also signaled the perceived inconsequential nature of female education at Purdue. First published in 1899, the *Debris* usually had at least one female student on its Board of Editors and often more on the general staff, for the years this study covers. Considering the small proportion of female students at Purdue, the *Debris* featured a surprisingly large amount of “female content,” meaning images of women, as well as stories, articles, and poems about female students in the early years. As time passed, during the years analyzed, and female students branched out into more fields of study and formed more clubs, they received less coverage in the yearbooks. Bearing their matriculation numbers in mind, female students still received their fair share of yearbook pages in later years, but it is probable that as Purdue grew and continued to legitimize itself as a respected university, there was less room for trivial poems and stories about student romances, which were very common the first few years of publication. Essays on the football team, new buildings, campus events, and increased number of pages devoted to the senior class, and group pictures of newly-minted clubs took their place. Women did not play football; their matriculation numbers did not increase in the same way that those for male students did; they were generally left out of the clubs formed by men; and most improvements to the campus were related to the schools of engineering, in which women rarely enrolled. The changes in yearbook content returned some dignity to female students, but made them less visible. They also indicate a feeling of insecurity among the male populous and a fear that the university would become feminized, a fear rampant among co-education institutions and those refusing to admit women.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ *The Debris*, 1889-1913, The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette IN. Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 81.

A Souvenir, a yearbook-type publication to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of Purdue University and published in 1890, did explicitly address co-education at Purdue. The short article begins, “The question is, ‘Is co-education a success at Purdue?’ Rather. Look at the alumni record, and see the list of fortunate Bachelors who found wives among their classmates.”⁹⁰ The next year, the *Debris* contained an article titled “The Purdue Girl,” that mostly discussed the beauty of female Purdue students and their courting habits. She was “cultured and accomplished,” but only because “she flirts, ponies, cusses (girl-fashion) and has been known to stand on her head at some of the private theatricals held in her most secluded cloister.”⁹¹ The predominantly male editors discussed “The Purdue Girl” as a romantic object for male students. They consider neither her academic work, nor the possibility of her obtaining a job.

The *Debris* published a similar essay, also titled “The Purdue Girl,” the following year. Once again, it focused on the romantic life that was apparently common for female students. According to this article, the Purdue girl was not shy. The *Debris* explained to its readers, “If you fail to ask her to go to the game she may ask you. But she is no women’s rights crank. Purdue boys don’t like those individuals, and she knows it. She does everything to please the boys.”⁹² The piece went on to claim that female students were rarely without a beau, and discussed the types of hats these women were likely to wear and their methods of flirtation. Once again, it mentioned nothing of her academic or future aspirations.

⁹⁰ *A Souvenir*, 1890, n.p., The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette IN.

⁹¹ *The Debris*, 1891, n.p.

⁹² *The Debris*, 1892, n.p.

The 1893 edition of the *Debris* supplied a program of speeches given at that year's senior banquet, including the topic, speaker, and short descriptive quote or poem for each address. Anna Nebeker spoke on "The Boys," and her quote was a short poem, "Love bless them,/ Joy crown them,/ God speed their career." W. B. Hampson was asked to speak about his female peers, "The Girls;" his speech listing was accompanied with poetic lines, "Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride/ Might hide their faults, if belles had faults to hide."⁹³ While editions of the *Debris* might include a list of alumni and alumnae along with their up-to-date cities of residence and career paths, the yearbooks rarely discussed what graduates of that year studied or what kind of career they planned to pursue. One exception surfaces in the 1893 edition of the *Debris*, which included a short poem about female art students. "Dainty hands for dainty art/ Carving leads them all./ Pretty work the co-eds part/ Over at the Hall."⁹⁴ The image in the poem is appropriate considering the number of women studying industrial art at this time; however, there are no others like it in any of the yearbooks between 1889 and 1913. While the *Debris* often published photographs and illustrations of women and poems and short stories about female students at Purdue, women were seldom depicted studying from books or presented as intellectual equals to their male peers. This disparity, along with the one found in the senior banquet program, indicates that the male students who put together the *Debris* each year neither took female students seriously academically nor recognized them as future professionals like themselves. According to Ryan K. Anderson, author of "The Law of College Customs is [as] Inexorable as the Laws of

⁹³ *The Debris*, 1893, 117.

⁹⁴ *The Debris*, 1893, 142. The term "co-ed" refers to female students and was used nationally; there was no nickname for male students. In this poem, "the Hall" refers to Art Hall, more commonly known as Ladies' Hall, the women's dormitory, which also housed the art department and, later, the home economics department.

Chemistry or Physics’: The Transition to a Modern Purdue University, 1900-1924,” women who “assimilated into student life ‘correctly’ ... no longer threatened the nature of student culture, [and] they were accepted as sex objects.”⁹⁵ So long as female students stayed in their place, male students did not consider them such a bother and enjoyed the social benefits of having women on campus.

As each year passed, the *Debris* became more sophisticated and informative; there were more substantive essays and fewer poems, illustrations, and obscure jokes. By the early 1900s, pages were filled with senior portraits accompanied by information about the student including nickname, school of enrollment, club memberships, and a short write-up about the student, which varied greatly in content from student to student. Caroline Belle Richardson of Lafayette was on the 1903 *Debris* staff. She was enrolled in the School of Science, and her thesis was titled “Effect of Sugar on Sourness.” The description of her read, “She is the only girl in the class who has devoted herself exclusively to the study of chemistry. She is one of those girls who may be considered a thoroughly ‘good fellow.’”⁹⁶ Although Richardson appears to have been highly regarded by her peers, they chose to point out that she was dedicated to the study of chemistry, a subject only a select group women studied at Purdue, and then called her a “good fellow,” rather like calling her “just one of the guys.” Richardson’s male contemporaries may have taken her seriously as a student, but she lost her identity as a young woman along the way.

⁹⁵ Ryan K. Anderson, “The Law of College Customs is [as] Inexorable as the Laws of Chemistry or Physics’: The Transition to a Modern Purdue University, 1900-1924,” *Indiana Magazine of History* (June 2003): 115.

⁹⁶ *The Debris*, 1903, 195.

Similarly, Anna Marie Wurster, also a member of the *Debris* staff, was considered an atypical young woman because of her interest in physics. Her thesis was on Louis Pasteur, a French chemist and microbiologist, and she received a Bachelor's Degree from the School of Science. Her fellow editors wrote, "Miss Wurster's favorite study is physics. In other respects she seems quite normal, so try to bear with her infirmity."⁹⁷ While it appears that Wurster was well liked by other students, her fellow *Debris* staff members clearly felt there is something horribly wrong with the fact that she enjoyed the study of physics. Most often these little write-ups served as a roast aimed at the student about whom they were written. Men were much more likely to be made fun of because of their lack of studying, because of where they came from, if they spent any time at an institution of higher learning other than Purdue, or because they spent too much attention to their female peers; however, the yearbook committee praised one young man, Leon Silberberg, who received a Bachelor's Degree from the School of Mechanical Engineering, for his intellectual prowess. Before getting in a job, they wrote, "He has a fad for work but he is not a dig. He is an artist in math and a genius at mechanics."⁹⁸ Because male students studying physics were not similarly mocked, it is safe to say that female Purdue students were considered abnormal for making themselves a student of any male-dominated field.

One of Richardson's and Wurster's classmates, Rose Cavins, was seen in a much different light. She was also from Lafayette and enrolled in the School of Science; however, her thesis title "The Great Painters of France," indicates she primarily studied art and/or French while at Purdue. About her the editors wrote, "This young lady is a

⁹⁷ *The Debris*, 1903, 199.

⁹⁸ *The Debris*, 1903, 195.

record when it comes to being engaged. During her first six years at Purdue she was engaged at least three times a year. Since last fall, however, she has been engaged but twice.”⁹⁹ The contrast between the portrayals of Richardson and Cavins by their peers indicates a lack of seriousness in the way art majors, who accounted for a high percentage of female Purdue students, were seen by their male peers. Similarly, women who were respected for their intellect were seen as abnormal otherwise. Female students, it seems, could never win, as there their academic choices were categorized as either an oddity or frivolous.

The write-up on Mabel Barton McBroom in the 1906 edition of the *Debris* reads, “‘Mabel,’ the civil girl is a trump. As a girl studying civil engineering she was looked upon as a curiosity in her freshman year, and few expected her to stick, but when she started out with the location parties in her junior year, all doubt of her graduating was dispelled.”¹⁰⁰ Although her peers eventually displayed confidence in McBroom’s ability to succeed in the field of civil engineering, McBroom’s classmates expected her to either drop out of school or change her major up until she began her junior year. Even though one could doubt the future graduation of any female Purdue student until she began her junior year, this review of McBroom clearly had to do with her academic interests rather than matriculation statistics.

Other indications that male students did not take seriously their female counterparts include numerous times where Purdue women were referred to in the context of romantic relationships. In the 1901 edition of the *Debris*, students wrote in to

⁹⁹ *The Debris*, 1903, 198.

¹⁰⁰ *The Debris*, 1906, 127. I have not been able to find any definition of what “location parties” are, but the context leads me to believe that a location party was a group of civil engineers who determined the location of roads, railroads, etc.

the editor for advice on various subjects. One man asked, “Can a young man afford to leave half his questions unanswered in a chemistry test in order to walk home with just one girl?” In response, the editor wrote, “By all means; embrace every opportunity to walk home with a young lady of your choice. There will be other chemistry tests – flunk tests, for instance, – but there is just one girl.”¹⁰¹ Similarly, in the earlier years of publication, there were many poems and short stories about romantic relationships between male and female students at Purdue.

As stated earlier, if female students were not taken seriously academically, it was also likely that they were not expected to seek the same forms of employment as their male peers. Early volumes of the *Debris* rarely discussed the future careers of female students; in the early twentieth century, this practice changed. Earlier write-ups focused on jokes or descriptions of women’s social lives, but in later years, the yearbook staff added a sentence about women’s post-graduation plans. Keeping in mind that few Purdue females graduated at all, most stated the preference for becoming a teacher, some locally, and others across the country or in a different nation, possibly as a missionary. While teaching was a popular profession for young American women at the turn of the twentieth century, Indianan society clearly anticipated no other career paths of a female Purdue student other than subsequently getting married. Bessie Margaretta Campbell graduated with a Bachelor’s of Science and likely majored in English as her thesis was on “Jane Austen’s People.” Her write-up in the 1907 edition of the *Debris* referred to her as the “most respected and loved girl” in her class and went on to muse about her future. “Whatever she does in the future, teaching, housekeeping, or even farming, we know that

¹⁰¹ *The Debris*, 1901, 289.

an intelligent and attractive girl like Bess can do naught but succeed.”¹⁰² Campbell’s write-up illustrates the options open to women at this time – teach or take care of their home after graduation no matter their level of intelligence and ability to succeed in a career.

While men at Purdue may have found the female students frivolous and not of much consequence academically or career-wise, it appears that the women themselves did understand themselves to be future professionals. An essay, with an unnamed author, on the Philalethean Society published in the 1900 edition of the *Debris* states, “In this end of the nineteenth century it is almost impossible to find a girl without some definite aim in life, whether from necessity or desire.”¹⁰³ Many of Purdue’s female students were members of the Philalethean Literary Society and were likely to feel a similar sentiment. Although their male peers or professors may not have expected them to do so, quite a few women at Purdue apparently intended to work outside the home and earn an income after graduation, and about half of graduates did just that.¹⁰⁴

The research of other historians shows that this conflict between a woman’s desire to work and societies disregard of that ambition expressed itself across the nation. In her research of land-grant universities in the West, Andrea Radke-Moss found that administrators had mixed feelings about what women should learn at their institutions and the purpose of a woman’s education. The Morrill Act of 1862 stated that each state

¹⁰² *The Debris*, 1907, 161.

¹⁰³ The Philalethean Society was the women’s literary society at Purdue University. The men had three societies of their own: The Emersonian, The Carlyle, and The Irvington. The Philalethean was founded to “supplement the work of the English Department, to encourage a taste for good literature and the use of good English, to enable its members to speak publicly with ease and fluency and to acquaint its members with correct parliamentary usage.” The secondary purpose of the society was to bring the young women of Purdue together, and most female Purdue students did participate. Women in The Philalethean studied subjects, such as art, literature, and history and performed debates with the male literary societies, wrote and read essays, and performed short plays. *The Debris*, 1900, 179; *The Debris*, 1901, 191.

¹⁰⁴ A Purdue Girl, “The Future of the Purdue Girl,” *Purdue Exponent*, January 1, 1903, n.p.

could use the appropriations from the act for one or more universities “where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts.”¹⁰⁵ Land-grant universities were often baffled by how they would provide a classical education as well as a vocational one for their female students. Similarly, male administrators and professors were confused about what women would actually do with their degrees after graduation. At the turn of the twentieth century, society generally assumed that female graduates would, like the average American woman, marry and then be occupied by running their households. In Indiana, this assumption may have often been narrowed even further by assuming that young women would marry, have a household to care for, and a family farm with which to assist.

A survey of the census records of over two hundred Indiana women, who attended Purdue University between 1887 and 1913, shows that female students predominantly came from farming families (See Appendix II). The largest group of fathers with the same occupation was farmers; nearly thirty percent of women searched for and found in census records had fathers who were farmers. Women who enrolled at Purdue appear to follow national trends in that they are primarily middle class. Women whose fathers were not farmers were clergymen, insurance agents, merchants, hotel, restaurant, and store proprietors, traveling salesmen, dentists, and physicians. Some women had fathers who were clearly working-class; the occupations of these men included janitor, huckster, and brick maker. While it is easy to imagine a farmer as a working-class individual, it is

¹⁰⁵ *Our Documents*, 86.

an unsafe assumption.¹⁰⁶ Radke-Moss points out that land-grant universities were places “where women supposedly trained to become farm wives,” but “these were middle-class wives, for whom cleanliness and moral preservation were even more important than cooking and keeping a garden. Many of the ‘farm wives’ might eventually do something else expected of women in their class: they would hire a girl.”¹⁰⁷ Farm work is known as tough labor, but prosperous farm families could hire others to do much of the manual labor for them.

For example, Virginia Claypool Meredith, who is further discussed in Chapter Two, came from a well-to-do farm family and she married into another well-to-do farm family. When her husband died unexpectedly and at a fairly young age, she took over what was once his family’s farm, which raised Southdown sheep and Shorthorn cattle. At a time when women were rarely farmers in their own right, Meredith considered herself a farmer and provided that as her occupation at census years. Meredith had a great understanding of how to successfully breed Southdown sheep and Shorthorn cattle, but she employed a farm manager and other staff to do the actual labor of keeping up her land. Meredith had many other occupations; she often traveled as a guest lecturer, including for the Indiana Farmer’s Institutes; for multiple years she taught home economics at the University of Minnesota; and she served on the Board of Lady Managers for the World’s Columbian Exposition, which took place in Chicago in 1893.¹⁰⁸ It is impossible to say which Purdue students had fathers who were wealthy like

¹⁰⁶ "Index to the 1870 United States Federal Census," <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed 10/9/2012; "Index to the 1880 United States Federal Census," <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed 10/9/2012; "Index to the 1900 United States Federal Census," <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed 10/6/2012; "Index to the 1910 United States Federal Census," <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed 10/6/2012. See Appendix II.

¹⁰⁷ Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 75.

¹⁰⁸ For more information on Virginia Claypool Meredith, see her biography, Frederick Whitford, Andrew G. Martin, and Phyllis Mattheis, *The Queen of American Agriculture: A Biography of Virginia*

Meredith and which were not, but as they all owned their own farms, rather than rented, it is fair to consider them all reasonably successful and therefore a part of the middle-class.

Female students at land-grants had fathers that worked in a variety of industries; while the financial situation of two women's families might be vastly different, "expectations of refinement were felt equally." The belief that women should be provided with the skills to support themselves financially, should the necessity arise, was also growing among the middle class.¹⁰⁹ And many American, female graduates did work after graduation, generally before marriage and as teachers. Contradictions about the education and careers of women at this time were many; only the thought that women had just as much right to be educated as their brothers seemed to go undisputed at this time.

This belief, as well as its complexity, is well illustrated in the late nineteenth-century essay by Emma Montgomery McRae, *Concerning the Education of Girls: a Paper*, published in 1897. Emma McRae (1848-1919) became a professor of English literature at Purdue University in 1887; she also held the position of "Lady Principal," a pre-cursor to a "Dean of Women." Students called her "Mother McRae," and she lived among the residents of Ladies' Hall and served as unofficial counselor to all female students at Purdue. In her essay, McRae argued that women "must be educated; they must know something of many things; they must know much of some one thing, and they must be able to do something."¹¹⁰ Though McRae began her essay by explaining the

Claypool Meredith (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008).

¹⁰⁹ Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 152.

¹¹⁰ Emma Montgomery McRae, "Concerning the Education of Girls: A Paper," p. 14, Emma McRae Papers, The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette IN; *Public Libraries: A Monthly Review of Library Matters and Methods*, vol. 12 (Chicago: Library Bureau, 1907), 225.

usefulness and necessity of an education in domestic science for women, married or not, she went on to discuss the merits of other fields of study, such as the agricultural subfields of horticulture, dairying, and animal husbandry; industrial art; and general science. McRae explained that while women might need such an education in order to support themselves, many others want it because they have a general desire to work. According to McRae “the do-nothing girl” was no longer fashionable.¹¹¹ Oddly, McRae never discussed her own academic field of choice, English, in her essay even though it was an academic path open to Purdue students. It was only at the very end that she suggested that the humanities should “include all of that great body of knowledge which tends toward human well-being” and not just subjects like language and poetry.¹¹²

McRae used subjects available to women at Purdue University as examples of what women should study: china painting, wood carving, butter making, chicken keeping, sanitary science, and food chemistry.¹¹³ Considering the close connection McRae had with female students during her tenure at the university, this essay provides a glimpse into what women were encouraged to study while at Purdue and what was expected of them after graduation, at least by few female professors they may have had while a student between the years of 1887 and 1913. While McRae’s views parallel those of the young women belonging to the Philalethean Literary Society, they generally counter those of male students at Purdue who found women interested in a career outside of housewifery an eccentric.

¹¹¹ McRae, “Concerning the Education of Girls,” 15.

¹¹² McRae, “Concerning the Education of Girls,” 16.

¹¹³ Food chemistry, sanitary science, and all other home economics coursework were available beginning in the fall of 1905 at Purdue University.

Contradictions abounded as to what women should study and do after graduation at Purdue University. Each woman at Purdue had a unique academic experience while at Purdue based on whether she lived on campus, in Ladies' Hall or in town, participated in extracurricular activities, devoted more time to finding a husband than studying, or expected to support herself financially. These revealing sources show how male students regarded the nearly twelve hundred female undergraduates and about five hundred irregular students at Purdue University between 1887 and 1913, as well as how these women saw themselves. *Annual Registers* show that most women who began at Purdue as regular undergraduates never managed to graduate and that most studied industrial art; however, those who did graduate rarely studied industrial art. Similarly, it appears as if Indianan society expected little of female Purdue students after graduation, which may explain why many female regular students deemed graduation unnecessary and why female irregular students chose a more relaxed pace of study, as well as how both groups of women often saw their time at Purdue as more of a recreational activity rather than a time for serious study. Similarly, the *Debris* painted female students as future wives more so than intellectual equals to their male peers or abnormal should they compete with men academically. Still some female students (and their female professors) took female students seriously academically and as future professionals, even in the early years presented in this study.

While there is still much to learn about the women who attended Purdue University at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as all women who attended other colleges and universities at this time, this chapter provides a general idea of the intellectual life of the Purdue Girl. A more in-depth look at a course of study that

provided the only major academic change for women at Purdue between 1887 and 1913 –
home economics – follows.

Chapter Two – A Practical Education for Girls: The Emergence of Home Economics at Purdue University

Because of its practical applications, the study of household sciences at the college level has a long history with universities and colleges funded by the Morrill Act of 1862; however, Purdue University was late in establishing its own such program. With the use of university-published documents and the personal papers of William C. Latta, this chapter examines the long and rough path Purdue University took, and, in some ways was forced to take, because of farmers' views on higher education and discrimination from male Purdue professors to establish a Department of Home Economics in 1905. The School of Science became home to the program, much to Latta's displeasure. The struggle required to establish the Department of Home Economics at Purdue illustrates the Indiana farming community's perception of women's roles in an institution of higher learning, as well as society at large; similarly, it sheds light on the exclusive and male-dominated culture established in Purdue's School of Agriculture.

In the fall of 1887, Purdue University offered, for the first time, semester-long courses of study in the "School of Domestic Economy." Classes took place once a week, and while the lectures and practice sessions were broken down into what were called "freshman year," "sophomore year," and "junior year," the entire three "terms" were scheduled over the course of just one school year.¹¹⁴ A course catalog noted that the series of lectures and practical lessons were optional and open to young women only.

¹¹⁴ Purdue University School of Domestic Economy, 1887-88. College of Health and Human Science records. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

Female students would enroll in the course on top of enrollment in a regular course, meaning this was not a program in which a woman would earn a degree, but it served as more of an extracurricular activity. Women could also enroll as irregular students if they wished “to devote their entire time to the study and practice of Domestic Economy.” These women attended domestic economy classes on a daily, rather than weekly, basis for a term of eleven weeks.¹¹⁵ Lectures were on topics such as bread making; boiling, simmering, and stewing; frying; and food decoration and garnishing.

In 1887, ten irregular, and an unknown number of regular, students took classes from the School of Domestic Economy. In his 1888 annual report, President James H. Smart reported that the program was “a gratifying success” to the Purdue Board of Trustees.¹¹⁶ In actuality, matriculation numbers proved too small to sustain the course. During the 1888 to 1889 term, fifteen women enrolled in the School, only one of which registered as an irregular student. Apparently, Purdue administrators considered such enrollment numbers inadequate, and the School of Domestic Economy was disbanded after just two years.¹¹⁷

While lectures were given on household management, laundry, and etiquette, it is unsurprising that Emma Pike Ewing, creator of and instructor for the School of Domestic Economy, chose cooking as her focus. Ewing, born in New York State in 1838, married W. P. Ewing in 1863 and gained national recognition as a cooking instructor after the

¹¹⁵ *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1887-1888* (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Burford, 1891), 56-58, The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette IN; *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1888-1889* (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Burford, 1891), 55-56. *Purdue University School of Domestic Economy, 1887-88*. College of Health and Human Science records. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

¹¹⁶ *The Fourteenth Report of Purdue University, The Same Being for Two Years Ending June 30, 1888. To the Governor* (Indianapolis: WM. B. Burford, Contractor for State Printing and Binding 1889), 15.

¹¹⁷ “Register of Students,” *The Annual Register of Purdue University, 1888-1889 and 1889-1890*.

Civil War. Ewing wrote several instructional books on cooking and taught cookery at vocational schools as well as at universities.¹¹⁸ After her time at Purdue, Ewing also helped form the Cooking School Teachers' League in August 1895, whose first objective was to "increase the knowledge of its members in cookery, and in the sciences which pertain to the household and home life."¹¹⁹ Ewing's focus on cooking may have been the reason that the program failed, as her previous attempts to lead home economics programs based in cookery at other universities, like Iowa State University, which she took over during the first few years of the 1880s, were also unsuccessful.¹²⁰ Although President James H. Smart reported that the program was "a gratifying success" to the Purdue Board of Trustees in his 1888 annual report; in actuality, matriculation numbers proved too small, and after just two years, the university discontinued the program and Ewing left Purdue. The subsequently-formed Department of Home Economics at Purdue include, but did not focus on, cooking.

The field of home economics had factions who disagreed on the purpose of an education in home economics at the college level. This field received its name at the first Lake Placid meeting in 1899 with contenders, such as domestic economy, household arts, home science, and Ellen Swallow Richard's suggestion of oekology. Although the meeting attendants in the end chose "home economics," a search for a better name continued throughout the following decade, which as Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti explain illustrates the tension that "existed among those who viewed home

¹¹⁸ Purdue University Archives and Special Collection Finding Aid for Emma P. Ewing, <http://www4.lib.purdue.edu/archon/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=461&q=ewing> (accessed 12/19/2011).

¹¹⁹ Emma P. Ewing, "The Cooking School Teachers' League," *American Kitchen*, IV, no. 5 (February 1896), 210.

¹²⁰ Women at Iowa State: Home Economics, "Emma Pike Ewing," <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~ucw/HistoryofWomenatISU/Emma%20Pike%20Ewing.html> (accessed 5/14/2013).

economics as primarily sociological and economic, those who viewed it as more closely tied to the sciences and the laboratory, and those who judged it in more traditional terms as related to women's domestic duties." This conflict caused home economics programs to act as both a radical attempt to integrate women into the male dominated fields of science and the conservative solution to the "woman question."¹²¹

Ewing's writings indicate that she belonged to the second school of thought. While some wanted to use home economics as a pretext to introduce women into the hard sciences, Ewing, who taught courses for Purdue's School of Domestic Economy from 1887-1889, simply wanted to use a mixture of common sense and science to improve the American household, specifically food preparation, which she believed affected all aspects of home life. In a paper delivered at the first meeting of the Housekeepers' National League in 1892 titled "Home-Making," Ewing explained the dangers for those who did not consider their household duties seriously,

The peace of a whole family is often destroyed for the day by such seemingly trivial affairs as burnt toast and muddy coffee for breakfast. Badly prepared meals have driven many husbands and brothers to saloons and drinking dens where they have picked up intemperate and licentious habits, and have been transformed into outcasts and criminals.¹²²

Ewing believed that the proper preparation of food was of utmost importance and that a woman's failure to recognize this could only lead her family to ruin. Still, she did not expect all women to receive training in the art of homemaking. Although Ewing's coincided with those of William C. Latta, that the home was of utmost importance, she

¹²¹ Sarah Stage, "Home Economics: What's in a Name?" in *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, eds. Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997, 5-6.

¹²² Emma P. Ewing, "Home-Making" in *The Housekeepers' National League: An Association for the Promotion of Household Science in the Home and Schools: Resolutions and Constitution Adopted* (1892), 7.

rejected the notion that the true purpose of all women was to become a housewife. However, like Latta and some of his peers, Ewing felt that those destined for housework should be thoroughly educated on the best practices of cooking, housekeeping, and related subjects. Her question, “What nobler ambition can there be in life for any woman than the ambition to make a perfect home?” clearly indicates that Ewing saw the field of home economics as one for future housewives, not scientists.¹²³ While female Purdue students were not necessarily attracted to home economics because of its scientific applications, a course of study based on cooking proved incapable of capturing their interest en masse.

After the breakdown of the School of Domestic Economy, home economics did not reenter the course catalogs until 1905. Many what had created home economics programs years before Purdue was willing or able. Iowa Agricultural College, today known as Iowa State University, offered its first course of study in domestic economy in 1871, the first program of its kind at in institution of higher learning in the nation.¹²⁴ Similar curricula spread to other land-grants. By 1905, thirty-six land-grant universities had departments of home economics.¹²⁵ As Purdue’s institutional historian, Robert W. Topping, put it, the creation of a Department of Home Economics in 1905 was “an example of Purdue’s tardiness in an area where it could well have been first”¹²⁶ – it certainly could have been one of the first had Ewing’s School of Domestic Economy

¹²³ Emma P. Ewing, “Home-Making” in *The Housekeepers’ National League: An Association for the Promotion of Household Science in the Home and Schools: Resolutions and Constitution Adopted* (1892), 9.

¹²⁴ Virginia B. Vincenti, “Chronology of Events and Movements Which Have Defined and Shaped Home Economics,” in *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, eds. Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 321.

¹²⁵ Paul Vernon Betters, *The Bureau of Home Economics: Its History, Activities and Organization* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1930), 5.

¹²⁶ Topping, *A Century and Beyond*, 170.

succeeded and grown. Finally, in the fall of 1905, female students could enroll in a program of practical study that would result in a bachelor's degree; however, this course of study had been hard-fought for over the course of years.

In the fall of 1898, when no domestic science courses were available for female irregular or regular undergraduates at Purdue University, an article in the *Purdue Exponent* argued that an education in scientific subjects regarding the home were necessary "in order to best provide for her household." A Purdue Girl

must know something of the scientific subjects that are engaging the attention of some of the world's greatest minds, ...knowledge of the principles of sanitary science, of the scientific prevention and the remedy of disease; she must have a knowledge of the principles of chemistry involved in the cooking and preparations of proper food for her table.

The author of this article, who remained unnamed, and therefore genderless, hoped that even more would seek enrollment because of all that the Purdue University School of Science provided. Similarly, he or she hoped that "the public" would come to view Purdue as the preeminent location for their daughters to gain the knowledge necessary to prepare them for the duties that would come to them after graduation.¹²⁷

Unlike many male professors at the turn of the twentieth century, William C. Latta, professor of Agriculture at Purdue University from 1882 to 1911, believed that a young woman deserved "just as good an education as her brother" and that her studies should be "as thorough, broad, cultural and technical" as a young man's. In a letter to Mabel Clare (Mrs. C. N.) Lindley, a recent Purdue graduate, Latta qualified his definition of "technical" as "in those lines, which will especially qualify her for her work as a house-keeper and home-maker" rather than prepare her for work as a farmer or engineer, as the men who attended Purdue were. In the same letter, Latta explains that the purpose

¹²⁷ "Girls at Purdue," *Purdue Exponent*, September 28, 1898, n.p.

of a young woman's education "should be to develop the true woman, show her that her mission as home-maker is an exalted one, give her such technical training as will enable her with greater ease and certainty to achieve her ideals...for her mission in the farm home."¹²⁸ Latta believed that young women should be college educated *and* that their education should prepare them for the life of a farm wife and mother.

Latta had allies at Purdue who felt that all women should take classes in the field of home economics, although these allies were few in number. Emma Montgomery McRae's 1897 essay, "Concerning the Education of Girls," acted as an advertisement for what a woman could study while at Purdue. Written almost a decade before the university established the Department of Home Economics, McRae asked, "Should a young woman be considered fitted for any station in life who has not been fortified by the practical knowledge that will enable her to meet the emergencies of the household?"¹²⁹ While McRae may not have agreed with Latta's belief that all women should become housewives and mothers, she certainly supported the study of home economics at the college level.

In the summer of 1901, with the construction of a new agricultural building on Purdue University's growing campus under way, Professor Latta began his fight with Purdue's administration for the implementation of a home economics program housed in the School of Agriculture despite the presumption that young women would fail to support such a program. To better his efforts, Latta often sought the help and advice of a

¹²⁸ William Carroll Latta, letter to Mrs. C. N. Lindley, 5 August 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 214-216. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

¹²⁹ Emma Montgomery McRae, "Concerning the Education of Girls: A Paper," p. 5-6. The Emma Montgomery McRae Collection, The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette IN.

long-time friend, Virginia Claypool Meredith. A successful farmer in her own right, Meredith was known across Indiana and even nationally as a breeder of Shorthorn cattle and Southdown sheep, as well as an advocate for the home economics movement. To spread the knowledge that they both deemed important, Latta often hired Meredith to speak on the subject of domestic science at the Indiana Farmers' Institutes, a traveling lecture series and extension program that he spearheaded for decades. The Indiana State Board of Agriculture founded the Farmers' Institutes in 1882; in 1889, the state handed the program over to Purdue, and Latta ran the Farmers' Institutes from 1889 through 1923. While Meredith pioneered as a female, professional farmer after the untimely death of her husband, her knowledge of animal breeding brought her business and respect from across the country. Still, Meredith maintained what American society considered an appropriate level of femininity with her participation in numerous women's clubs, the adoption of a friend's two orphaned children, and her support of the home economics movement as a way to prepare women for their roles as farm wives. Latta hoped that increased attendance by women at the Indiana Farmers' Institutes would prove that there was an interest in a four-year program in home economics at Purdue.¹³⁰ Even with Meredith's help, he remained unable to stimulate interest in home economics in the minds of young women or convince their parents that such an education would benefit their daughters when they became wives and mothers making it impossible to create a sustainable home economics program at Purdue.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Frederick Whitford, phone conversation with author, September 13, 2011.

¹³¹ Frederick Whitford and Andrew G. Martin, *The Grand Old Man of Purdue University and Indiana Agriculture: A Biography of William Carroll Latta* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2005), 197-201.

In a follow-up letter to Mable Clare Lindley (younger sister of Georgiana Lindley whose *Exponent* article “What Can a Girl do at Purdue?” is examined in Chapter One), Latta explained that, “we have not given any technical instruction in the line of cooking and house-hold management in connection with the general course for the very good reason that we have had no demand for it as yet.”¹³² After the failure of the School of Domestic Economy and continued disinterest held for the field of home economics at Purdue, President Stone seems to have only expressed reluctance in regards to creating such a course of study for women. In lieu of such a program, Stone suggested that Latta focus on improving the women’s programs provided by the Indiana Farmers’ Institutes; however, Latta resolved to “fight it out” because of his belief in the need of education for women who lived on farms, especially the wives of farmers.¹³³

Latta hoped to establish a Department of Home Economics within the School of Agriculture at Purdue by the fall of 1902.¹³⁴ In the summer of 1900, Latta organized an Indiana Farmers’ Institute district meeting for eight hundred women to discuss the state of women’s education in Indiana. The women passed resolutions in favor of women’s agricultural education and asked for the appropriation of state funds to establish such a

¹³² William Carroll Latta, letter to Mrs. C. N. Lindley, 5 August 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 214-216. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN; “Index to the 1880 United States Federal Census,” <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed 6/17/2013.

¹³³ William Carroll Latta, letter to Virginia Claypool Meredith, 31 July 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 164-167. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

¹³⁴ William Carroll Latta, letter to Mrs. W. L. Berryman, 30 August 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 370. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN; William Carroll Latta, letter to Miss Gertrude Barnes, 29 August 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 362. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

women's course at Purdue University. After this meeting, Latta confidently began recruiting both teachers and students for a home economics program at Purdue.¹³⁵

Latta began planning another, much smaller, conference for Indiana women to take place in August of 1901. Latta planned to discuss with the attendees the needs of farmers' wives and daughters, what could be done for women by the Indiana Farmers' Institutes and Purdue University, and the formation of home economics and homemakers' associations, or county women's auxiliaries, created by and for the benefit of women living on farms.¹³⁶ In a letter sent on July 15, 1901, Latta invited Virginia Meredith to speak at the meeting and explained that he had suggested to President Stone that Purdue host such a conference "to cultivate a sentiment which [would] ensure patronage of the work in Domestic Economy at Purdue."¹³⁷ At this time, farmers were only beginning to accept the reality that a degree in agriculture was of any use, and very few farmers had begun to send their sons and daughters to receive such an education.

A few days later, Latta lamented this fact in another letter to Meredith; he wrote, "Our people are just beginning to realize the need for granting a liberal support to the College, but they do not yet fully recognize that patronage is just as essential."¹³⁸ In the same letter, Latta outlined what he hoped the conference would accomplish. The first two points regarded the formal organization of women interested in the field of home economics, in this case the creation of home economics and homemakers' associations.

¹³⁵ Whitford and Martin, *The Grand Old Man of Purdue University and Indiana Agriculture*, 192.

¹³⁶ William Carroll Latta, letter to "Dear Madame," 10 August 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 269. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

¹³⁷ William Carroll Latta, letter to Virginia Claypool Meredith, 15 July 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 10-11. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

¹³⁸ William Carroll Latta, letter to Virginia Claypool Meredith, 18 July 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 43-46. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

The following three focused on college-level course work in home economics and Purdue's ability to provide it. Latta wished that women who attended this meeting would "carry home and fix the truth that the farmers' daughters need a liberal education which shall include a thorough training for home-making and house-keeping," to prove to those who came "that the Agricultural College is the place where this training should be secured," and to have the attendees "realize that the Agricultural College must have both financial support and patronage in order to do the kinds of work for which it was established."¹³⁹ Latta spent much of 1901 trying to convince as many women as possible of the merits of a liberal education with a focus on home economics and often used others to disseminate his ideas.

In two letters to women who were presenting at the Indiana Farmers' Institutes, Latta suggested that in their talks on "the farmer's daughter" and domestic science at the college level they touch on the benefits of receiving an education from a land-grant university. In his letter to Mable Clare Lindley, Latta pointed out "the young woman who expects to live upon the farm, would be greatly benefited by such an education as is afforded by the Agricultural Colleges," and that "Horticulture, Dairying, Gardening, Bee-keeping and Poultry Raising," the courses taught on and off again at Purdue, "are all pleasing, healthful and profitable avocations for women."¹⁴⁰ In his letter to Miss Laura G. Day, Latta requested that Day address why Domestic Science should be a part of a

¹³⁹ William Carroll Latta, letter to Virginia Claypool Meredith, 18 July 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 43-46. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

¹⁴⁰ William Carroll Latta, letter to Mrs. C. N. Lindley, 31 July 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 168-169. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

woman's college education.¹⁴¹ Latta ended both with assurances that his ideas were “merely suggestive” and not a required topic for the woman's presentation, but it is reasonable to assume that Latta hoped the women would accept his recommendations, which might in turn encourage more young women to enroll as a regular student at Purdue.

Latta also worked hard to recruit women for the 1901 Winter Short Course. Although the program first appeared in the 1891-1892 *Purdue Annual Register*, women did not participate in the program until the 1898-1899 term. The Winter Short Courses began in January and lasted eight to ten weeks. Nineteen women enrolled for the 1900 Winter Short Course after just two women had registered the year before. It is likely that Stone was persuaded to allow Latta organize a course of study in domestic science around this time to test the waters for a potential home economics department in the School of Agriculture. The matriculation numbers for the 1900 Winter Short Course were not sustainable. Only nine women participated the following year. Although women taking a regular course of study at Purdue might also attend Short Course lectures, Latta would soon learn that only six women enrolled to attend just the 1902 Winter Short Course. Latta acted unfazed by the declining matriculation numbers between the 1899-1900 and 1900-1901 terms. As he explained to Virginia Meredith, “it would be discouraging to me if I were disposed to be discouraged. I have however made up my mind not to be discouraged.”¹⁴² In multiple letters from the summer of 1901, Latta

¹⁴¹ William Carroll Latta, letter to Miss Laura G. Day, 1 October 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 496. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

¹⁴² William Carroll Latta, letter to Mrs. Virginia C. Meredith, 31 July 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 164-167. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

stated that he would like to have at least twenty-five women enroll in the 1902 Winter Short Course, over four times the number of women who actually registered.

Ignoring the apparent reluctance of women to sign up for any kind of home economics classes, Latta continued to seek female students for the Winter Short Course. In a September letter to Mrs. C. M. Thomas, a woman who attended the August women's conference organized by Latta, he asked "Can you send one or two from your locality?"¹⁴³ When a woman had to revoke her enrollment from the 1901 Winter Short Course and asked permission for a Mr. W. W. Mitchell to take her place, Latta asked "Can you not send some young woman as the other person from your county?"¹⁴⁴ To encourage overall enrollment in the Winter Short Course, all county farmers' organizations in Indiana received two Winter Short Course scholarships for the young men or women of their choice, but clearly Latta hoped that a greater number of women would seek out and receive these funds.¹⁴⁵

Latta also sent a letter to previous Winter Short Course students asking them to recommend people for the program. He asked, "On the strength of the good you received at Purdue, cannot you assure your young friends that the course will be a good thing for them?" Latta then specifically expressed interest in women who might want to enroll as a regular student in September 1901, stating "I have already learned of two young women who desire to enter the school of Agriculture in September. I wish there might be a class of five or six. We would so [adapt] the course as to make it suit their needs. Provisions

¹⁴³ William Carroll Latta, letter to Mrs. C. M. Thomas, 7 September 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 409. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

¹⁴⁴ William Carroll Latta, letter to Miss Wilma Scrange, 29 July 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 146. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

¹⁴⁵ *Bulletin of the Purdue University. Thirteenth Announcement of the Winter School of Agriculture, January 8-March 22, 1901.* October 1900, 1, no. 2, 15.

will be made for continued the work in Domestic Science as heretofore.”¹⁴⁶ While Latta wanted the enrollment for the Winter Short Course to increase in general, he was more specifically concerned with attracting women to the program, so that he could make a good argument for the creation of a home economics department to President Stone.

It is not completely clear as to when courses in home economics first joined the Winter Short Course curriculum at Purdue. The thirteenth annual announcement of the “Winter School of Agriculture,” published in October of 1900, is the oldest available source referencing the women’s program in the Winter Short Course. Also, women were not listed among the participants of the Winter Short Course until 1899; however, in the summer of 1901, Latta lamented to Virginia Meredith, “for some years, in our Winter Course Circulars, we have advertised instruction in Domestic Economy (cooking), House-hold Chemistry, House Sanitation, Horticulture, Floriculture, Botany, Dairying, English and Art. The response thus far has been very meager.”¹⁴⁷ No matter when the home economics courses were first available to women attending the Winter Short Course, it is clear from matriculation numbers and letters to friends and past students and allies in the field of home economics that Latta put significant energy and efforts into developing the 1900 and 1901 Winter Short Course. Latta believed that by using increasing enrollment numbers for the Winter Short Course, he could prove a need for a Department of Home Economics within the School of Agriculture by the Fall of 1902.

His efforts were unsuccessful.

¹⁴⁶ William Carroll Latta, letter to “Dear Friend,” 20 July 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 71. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN. Two women did in fact join the School of Agriculture, Rachel Bryan and Una Belle Turley, but neither woman remained there after their freshman years. Turley left Purdue after her first year, and Bryan moved to the School of Science for the 1902-1903, but did not return for her junior year.

¹⁴⁷ William Carroll Latta, letter to Virginia Claypool Meredith, 31 July 1901. Letter book 15 July 1901 to 9 December 1901, 164-167. The Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

By 1903, Latta withdrew his efforts, both inside and outside the university, but remained hopeful that a course of study in home economics would find its way into the Purdue curriculum.¹⁴⁸ Then, within two years, President Stone gave his full support for the founding of such a program within the School of Science. In his 1906 annual report, he declared that, “Purdue should offer to women opportunity comparable in scientific and technical value with those enjoyed by men.”¹⁴⁹ This apparent change of heart suggests that although Stone often discouraged Latta’s efforts to create a home economics program at Purdue, Stone may not have been opposed to instituting a domestic science curriculum to Purdue’s repertoire of instruction. The founding of the Department of Home Economics likely had more to do with timing and the realization by farmers that it could be beneficial to send their children to college. By the early 1920s, the program became one of the most popular that Purdue provided, and women in the Department of Home Economics soon outnumbered the men enrolled in all of the School of Agriculture. By 1927, Purdue awarded forty-nine women a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics and forty-nine others a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. From then on, degrees conferred in home economics exceeded those in agriculture by at least nine women.¹⁵⁰ In 1926, the Department of Home Economics had become the School of Home Economics.¹⁵¹

The founding of the Department of Home Economics at Purdue in 1905 brings up multiple questions: Why was the department founded after Latta worked tirelessly

¹⁴⁸ Whitford and Martin, *The Grand Old Man of Purdue University and Indiana Agriculture*, 197-201.

¹⁴⁹ *The Thirty-Second Annual Report of Purdue University for the Year Ending June 30, 1906* (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Burford, Contractor for State Printing and Binding, 1906), 29.

¹⁵⁰ “Degrees Conferred,” *The Annual Register of Purdue University 1926-1927, 1927-1928, 1928-1929, 1929-1930*.

¹⁵¹ Topping, *A Century and Beyond*, 211.

without success just a few years prior and why was the Department of Home Economics placed within the School of Science instead of the School of Agriculture, where Latta had wanted it and where such departments were often found at other land-grant universities? And how did the Department of Home Economics succeed while the School of Domestic Economy did not?

A degree in domestic science could not be more practical when facing a future as a housewife; however, many middle-class Americans at the turn of the twentieth century did not want their daughters associated with laborers, such as domestic servants. Parents still expected their daughters to learn domestic skills, but from their own mothers rather than professors. This philosophical dichotomy has more to do with the professionalization of domestic work. Parents likely hoped that their daughters would be the ones' hiring help or keeping their own house, while never forced to work in that of another. The founding of land-grant universities in general legitimized the study of home economics as "valid course work for women"; however, such sentiment took time to grow in Indiana.¹⁵²

While Indiana residents did not have to pay tuition to attend Purdue University, attending college came with a multitude of other expenses: laundry, room, board, and books required money. These costs, likely kept many Indiana women from attending Purdue. Nearly all female Purdue undergraduates grew up in Tippecanoe County, especially Lafayette and West Lafayette. Female students who remained in their parents' home while attending college were saving their family or themselves a considerable amount of money. Along with the cost of attending school and being away from home,

¹⁵² Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 143.

was that of losing a family member and the labor they provided. A child, male or female, away at school was of no use to their household.

Also, for many years, farmers were skeptical of what a college degree could provide for their children or their family as a whole. Until an era of professionalization formed after the Civil War, farmers generally believed that the skills needed to become a farmer were passed down from generation-to-generation and that university courses were of no use to them.¹⁵³ The same rule could be applied to the expectation that mothers would provide domestic lessons to their daughters making classes in home economics unnecessary. As late as the last decades of the nineteenth century, even the School of Agriculture had difficulty finding men to enroll. William C. Latta illustrated this problem in a letter to Virginia Meredith; he explained, “too many farmers are ready to complain and too few are ready to lend support, and only now and then one is ready to give his son, or daughter, the education which the Agricultural College is established to impart.”¹⁵⁴ President James H. Smart had revealed similar sentiments in his 1889 Annual Report stating,

The truth is that the farmers themselves are not yet alive to the necessity for giving their sons, who expect to remain on the farm, a liberal education. I believe that public sentiment is rapidly changing on this subject, however, and that it will soon be seen that there is as much necessity for educating farmers as for educating lawyers, doctors and ministers.¹⁵⁵

While President Smart did not directly mention farmers’ daughters in this portion of the report, it is reasonable to assume that farmers unwilling to send their sons away to college

¹⁵³ Topping, *A Century and Beyond*, 123; Frederick Whitford, phone conversation with author, September 13, 2011.

¹⁵⁴ William C. Latta, letter to Virginian Meredith, July 18, 1901, Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries, West Lafayette, IN.

¹⁵⁵ President James H. Smart, *The Fifteenth Report of Purdue University, The Same Being For The Year Ending June 30, 1889. To The Governor* (Indianapolis: WM. B. Burford, Contractor for State Printing and Binding, 1900), 10-11.

would not send their daughters. So long as farmers and housewives regarded the promises that science could improve life on the farm or in the home, they regarded a liberal education as dubious at best.

Around the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, likely because of the success of Indiana Farmers' Institutes, farmers began to realize that science could, in fact, improve the health and production of their farms and that a son sent away for four years would return with a wealth of knowledge that was worth more than the cost of room, board, and some lost labor.¹⁵⁶ One could expect young women and their parents to have similar feelings regarding the study of home economics. Most mothers could teach their daughters how to clean a house, but few knew the intricacies of bacteriology. While the School of Domestic Economy had focused on cooking, the Department of Home Economics had just one class on the subject. A young woman enrolled in the Department of Home Economics in 1906 could, aside from general requirements like math, natural sciences, art, history, economics, English, and modern languages, take classes titled Household Management, Sanitary Science, Industrial Biology, Dietetics, Therapeutic Cooking, Home Decoration, Food Preservation and Adulteration Hygiene and Nutrition, Textiles, and Household Economics.¹⁵⁷

By the time of the founding of the Department of Home Economics in 1905, preparing for the occupation of a housewife meant more than being a good cook. As the nation's economy changed at the turn of the twentieth century, home economics became viewed as the "industrialization of women's traditional occupation." An education in how to properly clothe one's family, nutrition, how to decorate one's home, and etiquette

¹⁵⁶ Frederick Whitford, phone conversation with author, September 13, 2011.

¹⁵⁷ *Purdue University: The Department of Home Economics* (Lafayette, IN: Purdue University, 1906), 3-10.

were viewed as useful training for a woman's life as a homemaker just as courses in physics and mathematics would prepare a young man to become an engineer.¹⁵⁸ Along with the rest of American middle-class society, parents in Indiana likely began to see that a degree in home economics could prepare their daughters for life as a wife and mother.

Concerning the reason for why the Department of Home Economics found its home in the School of Science rather than the School of Agriculture, the lack of sources allows for conjecture only. Generally, male professors everywhere feared what they considered the feminization of the subjects they taught, meaning the occurrence of women greatly outnumbering men in their classrooms, which was common in art, literature, and language courses.¹⁵⁹ Most female students at Purdue enrolled in the School of Science. While many men also enrolled in the School of Science, they were most frequently enrolled in the Schools of Engineering and the School of Agriculture. It is likely that agricultural professors feared women entering the School of Agriculture might scare off male students and leave them with only women to teach, whom they respected little as students. Similarly, professors' fear of the development of distracting romantic relationships in their classrooms must have been ever present.

A careful look at the pamphlets printed to advertise the Purdue Winter Short Course, reveals the School of Agriculture's lack of effort to attract female students to the program. Both men and women could take classes on soils and fertilizers, animal husbandry, dairying, horticulture, agriculture, and wood and iron work. Women, but not men, could also take classes in floriculture, household chemistry, house sanitation,

¹⁵⁸ Linda Marie Fritschner, "The Rise and Fall of Home Economics: A Study with Implications for Women, Education, and Change" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Davis, 1973), 20.

¹⁵⁹ Women, taught courses in these three subjects, as well as English and biology, at Purdue; Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 80-81.

domestic science, botany, drawing, and English. Hypothetically, women could follow any course of study they wished, but the pamphlet explained that young women would find the courses open to women only “especially attractive and profitable.”¹⁶⁰ Ten lectures on home making, household management, “what constitutes a true home,” “woman’s sphere in the home,” the art and science of housekeeping, meal preparation, decorating and care of the home, and sewing made up the course of Domestic Science taught by Nellie S. Kedzie, a visiting professor and a nationally famous home economics instructor. Henry A. Huston taught Household Chemistry, which covered fuel and light for the home and the effect of heat on foods like starches, fats, dairy, flours, vegetables, meats, and canned goods.¹⁶¹

The *Thirteenth Announcement of the Winter School of Agriculture* pamphlet, printed to advertise the 1900-1901 Winter Short Course, displays images of both men and women at work in their classes. While the photographs more often illustrate the segregation of men and women, one of a class in dairying depicts both men and women learning together as academic equals. Even though it seems that courses were generally chosen based on the gender of the student, this pamphlet clearly communicates a sense of inclusivity towards women, which was not necessarily the case for previous years and was not the case in future announcements for the Winter Short Course. The announcements for the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth annual Winter Short Course did not advertise any courses in the field of home economics. Domestic Science did not reenter the curriculum of the Winter Short Course until the

¹⁶⁰ *Thirteenth Announcement of the Winter School of Agriculture, January 8 – March 22, 1901* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University, 1900), 4-5.

¹⁶¹ *Thirteenth Announcement of the Winter School of Agriculture, January 8 – March 22, 1901* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University 1900), 11.

1908 session, which is striking considering teachers, equipment, and classrooms were all in place for regular students enrolled in the Department of Home Economics since the fall of 1905.

While women were still able and willing to enroll in the Winter Short Courses during the hiatus (1902 through 1906) of home economics courses (one through five women did each year), the pamphlets advertising the Winter Short Course during these years were much less open and accepting of female students. While some were simplified compared to the *Thirteenth Announcement of the Winter School of Agriculture* and had no pictures included on their pages, those that did provide images did not show any women, even those of dairying classes in which women would have been most likely to enroll.¹⁶² As family cows were often the responsibility of farm wives – as was butter and cheese production – dairying became a more practical choice over horticulture, agriculture, and animal husbandry, the three other paths of study open to Winter Short Course students.¹⁶³ Once home economics was reintroduced into the Short Course curriculum, images of or including women remained absent from Short Course pamphlets. This slight indicates a general lack of enthusiasm for female students from the School of Agriculture.

This opposition to female students likely stemmed from the School of Agriculture's male professors. While William Latta championed the enrollment of

¹⁶² *Announcement of the Fifteenth Winter School of Agriculture January 6 to March 20, 1903*, (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University, 1902). *Announcement of the Sixteenth Winter School of Agriculture January 5 to March 11*, (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University, 1904). *Announcement of the Seventeenth Winter School of Agriculture*, (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University, 1904). *Announcement of the Eighteenth Winter School of Agriculture*, 4, no. 1 October 1905. *Announcement of the Nineteenth Winter School of Agriculture* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University, 1906). *Announcement of the Twentieth Winter School of Agriculture* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University, 1907). *Announcement of the Winter Courses in Agriculture*, (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University, 1909).

¹⁶³ Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 163.

women in the School of Agriculture, his colleagues were less enthused about the inclusion of women in their classes. In 1908, John Skinner became the first Dean of the School of Agriculture after having taught at Purdue since 1901.¹⁶⁴ When a woman enrolled in the School of Agriculture, likely at the insistence of William Latta, Skinner refused to take the young woman seriously as a student and showed this by not mentoring her. According to Frederick Whitford, an agricultural professor at Purdue University and biographer of John Skinner, William C. Latta, and Virginia C. Meredith, Skinner felt that female students at Purdue were only out to find a husband among their classmates.¹⁶⁵ Skinner saw Purdue as a place of learning rather than one for budding romances and preferred the young women of Purdue keep a distance from his male students. Skinner's feelings of distrust towards the academic integrity of female students are not completely incomprehensible considering the dropout rates among female students.

Interestingly, Skinner did mentor women who attended the Agricultural Winter Short Course.¹⁶⁶ This apparent inconsistency may be resolved by noting that women who attended the Short Course were sometimes older, married, looking to increase their already developed knowledge of the field. It is possible that Skinner, as well as other professors in the School of Agriculture, protested the addition of the Department of Home Economics for fear of its feminizing effects and abhorrence for teaching young women in their teens and very early twenties, who they considered frivolous. Also, since nearly all women were enrolled in the School of Science, placing the Department of Home Economics within it could only help keep them in what was now considered their

¹⁶⁴ Although a School of Agriculture had existed at Purdue since its founding, the School never had a dean before 1908.

¹⁶⁵ Frederick Whitford, phone conversation with author, September 13, 2011.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

place. Whatever the reasoning, it turned out to be an unfortunate placement for the School of Agriculture in the end. The popularity of the Department of Home Economics was almost instantaneous, and in the 1920s there were more women enrolled in it than students in the whole School of Agriculture.¹⁶⁷

Overall, the struggle surrounding the formation of the Department of Home Economics at Purdue University illustrates how Purdue disregarded the education of women. Young women struggled for decades between their own and society's ideas of what they should study and the real purpose of attending a land-grant university. The late founding of the Department of Home Economics demonstrates how the people of Indiana, the regional farming community, and Purdue's male faculty felt about preparing women for independence, or the lack of its necessity.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

Conclusion

This project began with curiosity as to what women studied at institutions of higher learning at the turn of the twentieth century. Of course, the question in mind was more easily posed than resolved, but looking for an answer led to an understanding of the academic lives of college and university women. Although sources are sparse regarding this subject, research revealed the academic patterns of female students at Purdue and examples of how women perceived their own education, especially its purpose, and how their male peers and professors viewed them.

The literature on the higher education of women shows how little historians know about what women studied at colleges and universities at the turn of the twentieth century. As Andrea Radke-Moss states, “a complete history of women’s course work at land-grant colleges and universities would require a book-length examination,”¹⁶⁸ and thus far, the subject of curriculum rarely receives more than a chapter’s worth of space. This project sought to begin to answer questions about what women studied at the turn of the twentieth century at Purdue University. Scholars insist that women were both considered by institutions of higher learning as academic equals to their male peers and constrained by American social mores and relegated to ladies’ courses and subjects of studied deemed appropriate, such as French, art, literature, and home economics. This conflict appears, in the case of Purdue University, a fairly representative microcosm of what women were studying at the turn of the twentieth century at institutions of higher learning, although Purdue functioned on a smaller scale than at other land-grant universities, which had higher female enrollment numbers than Purdue. While such an

¹⁶⁸ Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 144.

inconsistency seemed an impossible contradiction before research began on this project, it appears true that while some women took classes side by side with men, the others stuck together on a more feminine and socially acceptable path of study. This congruence between the work of historians who write on the female academic experience at institutions of higher education and the academic experience found at Purdue suggests that the practices at Purdue University, which naturally educated Indianans more often than not, paralleled those at coeducational colleges and universities across the nation in these years. Still, there were areas in which Purdue did not illustrate national academic trends for women.

While an article in the September 1898 edition of the *Purdue Exponent* reported on the “large increase in the number of girls in attendance at Purdue,” female matriculation numbers were arguably dismal when compared to those at other schools, including land-grants. Between 1887 and 1910, female enrollment remained fairly consistent in numbers, but women became less visible due to the surge of male enrollment during these years. In 1890, women made up seventeen percent of undergraduates at Purdue University; this figure dropped to just three percent by 1910. Nationally, women made up thirty-six percent of college goers in 1890; by 1910, their registration increased to forty percent. Decades would pass before the ratio of male and female Purdue students reflected those found at other coeducational institutions. While some universities backpedaled on their choice to go co-ed out of fear that women would take over, such a problem could not have been on the minds of Purdue administrators who had to work hard to recruit male students for several years after Purdue’s founding. No drastic measures, such as those taken by Stanford University between 1904 and 1933,

where enrollment became restricted so that no more than one female student could attend for every three matriculating males, were necessary. While other institutions abolished coeducation or created financially impractical women's annexes, there remains no indication that Purdue administration found these choices necessary or desirable after women began being accepted as students in 1875; however, female matriculation at Purdue rates remained low compared to national trends, so it is quite possible women were discriminated against in a more veiled fashion.¹⁶⁹

Persistence rates, the percentage of women who made it from their freshman year all the way to graduation, of female Purdue students do not reflect those found at other coeducational institutions. In her research on land-grant universities in the West at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, Andrea Radke-Moss found that although men made up a greater percentage of a university's population, "higher percentages of women were able to complete their degrees." She attributes this incongruence to the possibility that "because of the newness of land-grant coeducational experience, women did not enroll casually or on a whim." She also theorizes that because female students were a minority, they felt greater pressure to succeed academically.¹⁷⁰ At Purdue the persistence rates were quite high for the women in some classes between 1887 and 1913, but, overall, women were much more likely than men to leave Purdue after their freshman year. The popularity among women of enrolling at Purdue as irregular students begets the belief that many women lacked the commitment, support, or resources necessary for completing a bachelor's degree upon entering Purdue.

¹⁶⁹ Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 59; Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 296.

¹⁷⁰ Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 291-293.

Purdue also did not fit the same mold as other co-educational institutions of higher learning in the arena of home economics. Private, all-women's colleges, like the Seven Sister schools in the East, had viewed home economics at the college level as a step back for women into the kitchen after a hard fight for options outside of housewifery. Similarly, many middle-class families saw housework as in the sphere of servants, not in that of their daughters who were to become refined women. While many women's colleges remained firm in their decision to not develop domestic science programs, newly established land-grant universities were able to convince American society of the legitimacy of the field of home economics.¹⁷¹ Still, some people today continue to view home economics as a field in which women were directed toward by university administration, as a reaction to fear of women feminizing fields in the humanities. Purdue University administrators claimed that few women were interested in pursuing home economics as a field of study and therefore held off on forming a Department of Home Economics until 1905. Because of the great popularity of the Department of Home Economics, it seems more likely that this course of study was thwarted to keep women off of Purdue's campus. Low matriculation numbers in general meant that female students were of little threat to the male-dominated world of Purdue; however a whiff of change appears after 1910, when the number of female students continued to increase greatly each following year.

It is fair to say that in areas mentioned above, where Purdue University differed from the national trend on the higher education of women at the turn of the twentieth century, Indianan values and expectations are exposed rather than those of American society as a whole. First, a woman's choice to attend a college or university at all was,

¹⁷¹ Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 143. Megan J. Elias, *Stir It Up*, 15-16.

based on Purdue's numbers, fairly uncommon. Second, when women did choose to apply to Purdue and enroll in classes, they most often left without obtaining a degree. Last, although a land-grant institution, which was established to provide its students with a technical education, Purdue most often taught women subjects with little life-long practical application. The first two of these points indicate that Indianans did not come to value a college education for their children, especially their daughters, as did residents of other states. The third implies an expectation for the young women of Purdue to become cultured rather than develop into knowledgeable farm wives, despite Indiana's agriculture-based economy. Purdue lagged behind other land-grant universities in their support of women's academic ambitions, but the eventual formation of the Department of Home Economics may have been a starting point for Purdue to catch up with national trends in women's higher education in terms of programs available and female matriculation numbers.

Appendix I
Regular Students by Gender

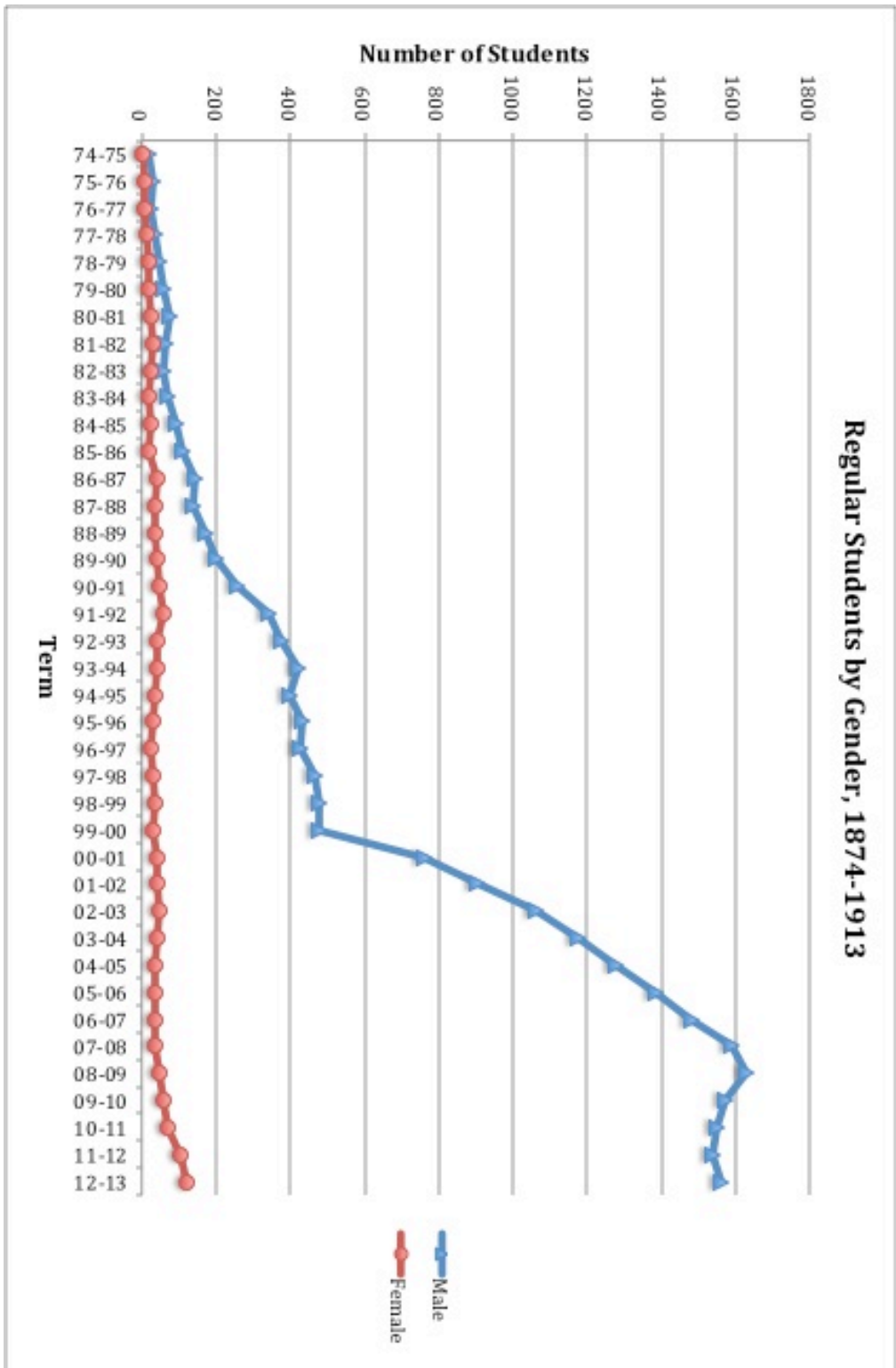
Term	Number of Female Students	Number of Male Students	Percentage of Female Regular Students
1874-1875	0	16	0
1875-1876	6	32	16
1876-1877	14	35	29
1877-1878	17	48	26
1878-1879	20	56	26
1879-1880	27	63	30
1880-1881	29	67	30
1881-1882	26	61	30
1882-1883	17	72	19
1883-1884	*	*	*
1884-1885	22	91	19
1885-1886	21	108	16
1886-1887	41	141	23
1887-1888	37	140	21
1888-1889	35	170	17
1889-1890	39	199	16
1890-1891	45	259	15
1891-1892	59	343	15
1892-1893	44	378	10
1893-1894	43	419	9
1894-1895	37	400	8
1895-1896	28	435	6
1896-1897	27	427	6
1897-1898	28	468	6
1898-1899	34	478	7
1899-1900	30	479	6
1900-1901	41	761	5
1901-1902	41	901	4
1902-1903	47	1059	4
1903-1904	40	1173	3
1904-1905	38	1276	3
1905-1906	33	1387	2
1906-1907	37	1481	2
1907-1908	33	1588	2
1908-1909	47	1629	3
1909-1910	58	1572	3
1910-1911	72	1547	4
1911-1912	105	1537	6
1912-1913	119	1559	7

Irregular Students by Gender

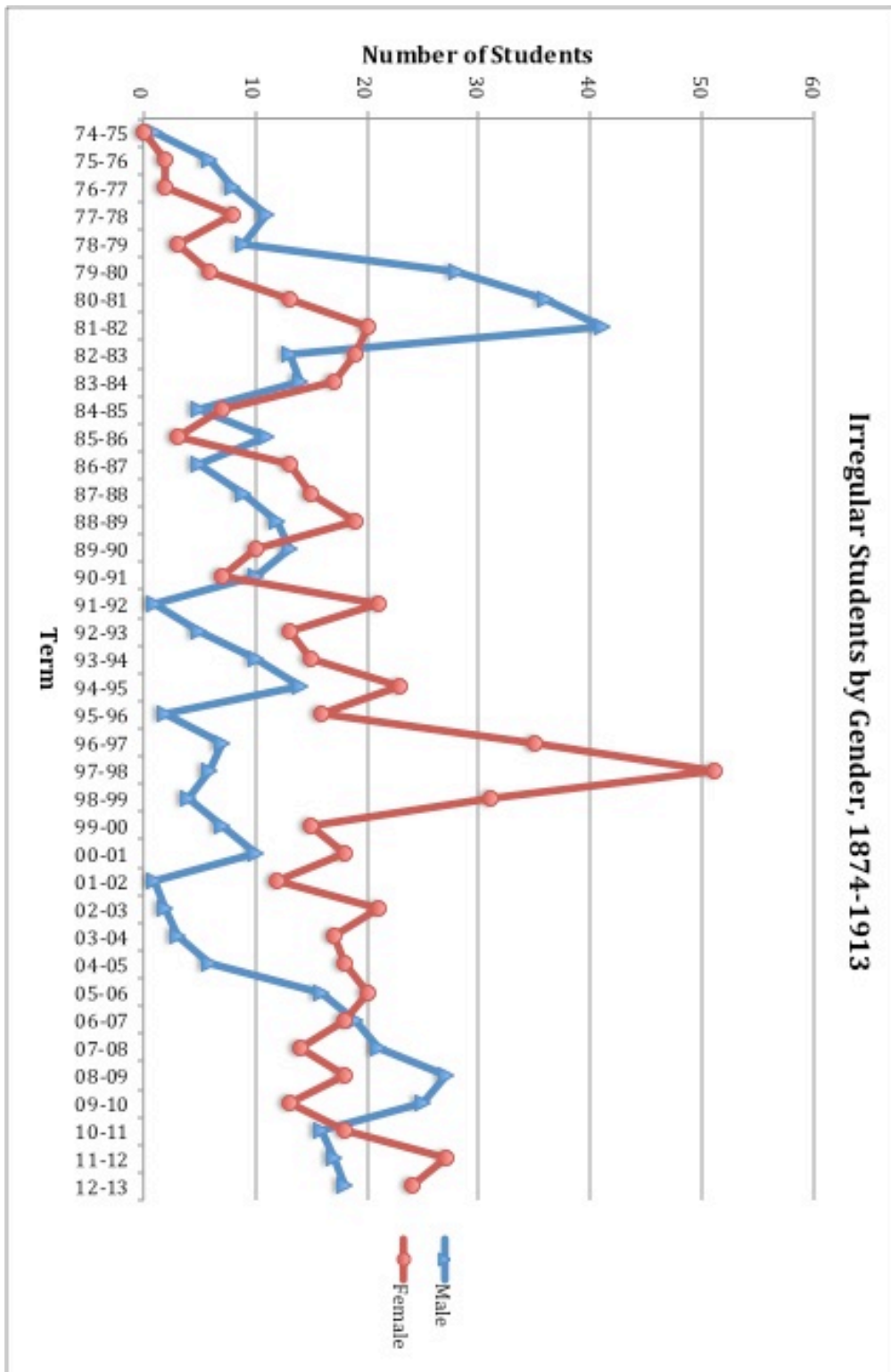
Term	Number of Female Irregular Students	Number of Male Irregular Students	Percentage of Female Irregular Students
1874-1875	0	1	0
1875-1876	2	8	20
1876-1877	8	11	42
1877-1878	3	9	25
1878-1879	6	28	18
1879-1880	13	35	27
1880-1881	15	46	25
1881-1882	20	13	61
1882-1883	17	14	55
1883-1884	*	*	*
1884-1885	7	5	58
1885-1886	3	11	21
1886-1887	13	5	72
1887-1888	15	9	63
1888-1889	19	12	61
1889-1890	10	13	43
1890-1891	7	10	41
1891-1892	21	1	95
1892-1893	13	5	72
1893-1894	15	10	60
1894-1895	23	14	62
1895-1896	16	2	89
1896-1897	35	7	83
1897-1898	51	6	89
1898-1899	31	4	89
1899-1900	15	7	68
1900-1901	18	10	64
1901-1902	12	1	92
1902-1903	21	2	91
1903-1904	17	3	85
1904-1905	18	6	75
1905-1906	20	16	56
1906-1907	18	19	49
1907-1908	14	21	40
1908-1909	18	27	40
1909-1910	13	25	34
1910-1911	18	16	53
1911-1912	27	17	61
1912-1913	24	18	57

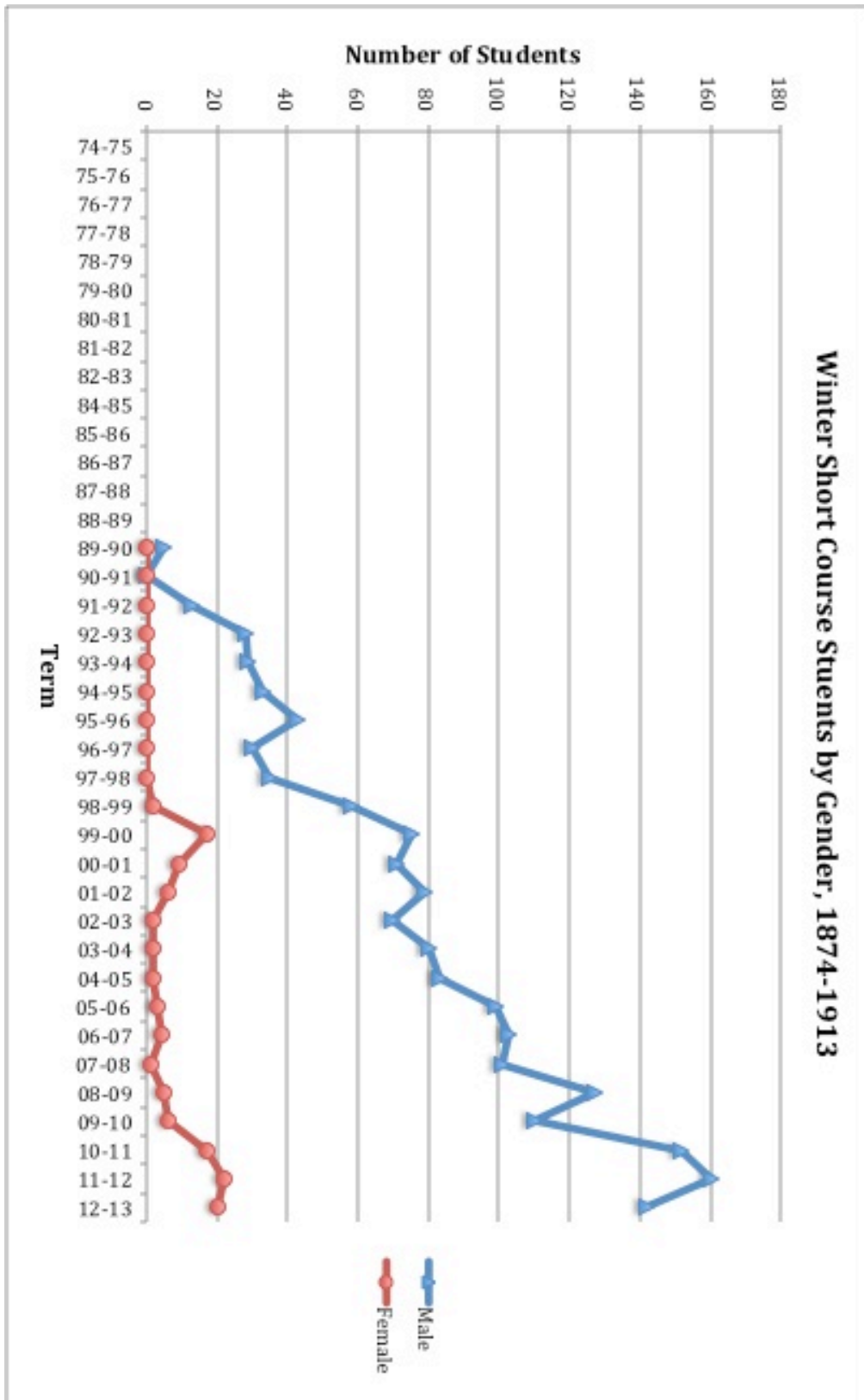
Winter Short Course Students by Gender

Term	Number of Female Students	Number of Male Students	Percentage of Female WSC Students
1889-1890	0	5	0
1890-1891	Not Reported	Not Reported	
1891-1892	0	13	0
1892-1893	0	28	0
1893-1894	0	29	0
1894-1895	0	33	0
1895-1896	0	43	0
1896-1897	0	30	0
1897-1898	0	35	0
1898-1899	2	58	3
1899-1900	17	75	18
1900-1901	9	71	11
1901-1902	6	79	7
1902-1903	2	70	3
1903-1904	2	80	2
1904-1905	2	83	2
1905-1906	3	99	3
1906-1907	4	103	4
1907-1908	1	101	1
1908-1909	5	127	4
1909-1910	6	110	5
1910-1911	17	152	10
1911-1912	22	160	12
1912-1913	20	142	12



Irregular Students by Gender, 1874-1913





Data for graphs accumulated from Purdue University *Annual Registers* 1874-1875 through 1912-1913.

Appendix II
Census Report

	1890	1900	1910
Residence: Regular Female Students	Lafayette/West Lafayette (13) 25-Mile Radius (3) Rest of State (4)	Lafayette/West Lafayette (37) 25-Mile Radius (4) Rest of State (2)	Lafayette/West Lafayette (36) 25-Mile Radius (8) Rest of State (18)
Residence: Irregular Female Students	Lafayette/West Lafayette (1) 25-Mile Radius (0) Rest of State (1)	Lafayette/West Lafayette (7) 25-Mile Radius (1) Rest of State (1)	Lafayette/West Lafayette (7) 25-Mile Radius (1) Rest of State (3)
Residence: Female Winter Short Course Students	n/a	Lafayette/West Lafayette (7) 25-Mile Radius (0) Rest of State (10)	Lafayette/West Lafayette (2) 25-Mile Radius (0) Rest of State (10)
Father's Occupation: Regular	Farmer (8) Business Class (4) Working Class (2) Dead (3) Not Found (1)	Farmer (4) Business Class (14) Working Class (5) Dead (3) Not Listed (5)	Farmer (20) Business Class (30) Working Class (3) Dead (9) Illegible (2) Not Listed (1)
Father's Occupation: Irregular	Working Class (2)	Business Class (2) Working Class (1) Dead (1) None Listed (1) Not Found (4)	Farmer (3) Business Class (4) Working Class (1) Dead (1) Not Found (3)
Father's Occupation: WSC	n/a	Farmer (6) Business Class (1) Working Class (1) Dead (3) Not Found (6)	Farmer (9) Business Class (1)
Age of Beginning Purdue Female Student: Regular	Teens (15) 20s (4)	Teens (18) 20s (3)	Teens (52) 20s (15)
Age of Beginning Purdue Female Student: Irregular	Teens (1) 20s (2) 30s (1)	Teens (5) 20s (2) 30s (3) 40s (1)	Teens (4) 20s (7) 30s (2)
Age of Beginning Purdue Female Student: WSC	n/a	Teens (3) 20s (6) 30s (4) 40s (1) 50s (3)	Teens (5) 20s (4) 30s (1)
Marital Status: Regular	Married (0), Single (20)	Married (0), Single (27)	Married (0), Single (67)
Marital Status: Irregular	Married (1), Single (1)	Married (4), Single (5)	Married (3), Single (9)
Marital Status: WSC	n/a	Married (7), Single (9)	Married (0), Single (11)

This census research was undertaken with the aim to find the marital status of the women, the occupations of their parents, and the birthplace of their parents, and whether or not their family home was rented or owned. Census records from the years 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, and 1920 (1890 census records have been lost) were used to create this table. 233 Indiana residents who were students at Purdue University during the years 1890, 1900, or 1910 were researched. Of those 233, 57 women could not be located among census records. This investigation comprised all regular, irregular, and Winter Short Course women who attended Purdue during census years. This table is broken down by census year (1890, 1900, 1910) and academic status (regular, irregular, winter short course). It provides information on the age, economic status, and marital status of female Purdue students, as well as shows how close or far they lived from Purdue's campus before becoming students there.

- When a father's occupation is listed as "Not Found," this means that the student was married when she became a Purdue student, and no census records could be found for her prior to her marriage.
- Female Students who did not grow up within a 25-mile radius of Lafayette, Indiana predominantly came from towns 80 to 200 miles from Lafayette.
- Fathers of the business class were judges, lawyers, doctors, dentists, business owners, merchants, professors, clergymen, and salesmen. Fathers of the working class were carpenters, electricians, hucksters, brick makers, harness makers, and janitors. Because farm families could range from poor to wealthy, fathers who were farmers have been separated from business and working class fathers. This also shows the great significance of agricultural culture at Purdue University.

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Education:

Bachelor of Arts in History, Michigan State University, 2009
Minors in Art History, Anthropology

Master of Arts in History, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, 2013
Thesis – Purdue Girls: The Female Experience at a Land-grant University, 1887-1913

Professional Experience:

- Indiana Historical Society – Intern, Department of Education and Community Engagement: August 2011-October 2012
- Woodstock Historical Foundation, Inc. – Researcher: June 2011-July 2011
- Research Assistant to Dr. Rebecca K. Shrum: March 2011-June 2011
- Indiana Historical Bureau – Intern: August 2010-February 2011
- Indiana Landmarks – Intern: June 2010-July 2010
- National Council on Public History – Intern: August 2009-May 2010
- MSU Museum – Collections Volunteer: October 2008-May 2009
- Chicago History Museum – Collections Intern: June 2008-August 2008

Conference Attendance:

- 2009 American Association for State and Local History
- 2010 Preserving Historic Places: Indiana's Statewide Preservation Conference
- 2010 National Council on Public History/American Society for Environmental Historians
- 2011 Preserving Historic Places: Indiana's Statewide Preservation Conference
- 2011 Great Lakes History Conference, presented on a panel
- 2011 Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning – Indiana Education Transformation Conference