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# The "Quickening Power" of Education: Women Students at South Dakota State University, 1885-1920

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# The “Quickening Power” of Education: Women Students at South Dakota State University, 1885–1920

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LISA R. LINDELL

“A DECISION AGAINST WOMAN,” blazed a headline in the college newspaper, the *Industrial Collegian*, in June 1895, referring to an oratory contest in which a female college student was allegedly denied victory because of her gender.<sup>1</sup> “SHALL WE PLAY BASKET BALL?” invited another story headline in the April 1897 *Collegian*. “The time has passed when the girl who would indulge in out door sports is not considered a lady.” In 1911, an essay entitled “The Emancipation of Woman” appeared in the college’s *Jack Rabbit* yearbook, proclaiming, “This is the age of the new woman.”<sup>2</sup>

These items from the dawn of the twentieth century denoted the increasingly receptive environment in which the women of South Dakota Agricultural College (SDAC) found themselves. The land-grant college, coeducational from its inception, had welcomed its first college-level students in the fall of 1885.<sup>3</sup> Offering free tuition to residents of Dakota Ter-

1. *Industrial Collegian*, 1 June 1895. The student orator was Mabel Mayland, an 1895 graduate. The college’s newspaper underwent several changes throughout the years. From the fall of 1885 until August 1891, it was called the *Dakota Collegian* and appeared once a month. From September 1891 to March 1893, it was known as the *South Dakota Collegian* and continued as a monthly. From June 1893 to June 1941, it was called the *Industrial Collegian*. The newspaper was issued biweekly until August 1896, monthly from September 1896 to June 1910, and weekly after September 1910. In the fall of 1941, the name reverted to the *South Dakota Collegian*.

2. *Ibid.*, Apr. 1897; Amy Ladd, “The Emancipation of Woman,” *Jack Rabbit* (1911), n.p. Until 1934, the college yearbook was produced by the junior class and dated with their graduation year; thus, the 1911 *Jack Rabbit* appeared in 1910.

3. Established as Dakota Agricultural College, the school became South Dakota Agricultural College with statehood in 1889, South Dakota State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts in 1907, and South Dakota State University in 1964. Although the college opened in the fall of 1884, those enrolled that year consisted wholly of preparatory students. The

ritory, free rooms, and a special course in domestic economy “for ladies,” the school quickly attracted a number of female students. Lulah Wellman, the first woman to graduate from the institution, received her degree in 1888. By 1920, 289 women had completed the four-year program, constituting 35.5 percent of the 815 graduates to that time. During the span of years from 1888 to 1920, women’s roles and public perceptions about those roles were in flux, and conditions at the agricultural college reflected the changes occurring in society at large.

While opportunities for women during the period were expanding, those who asserted their support for the college women often stopped short of embracing equality between the sexes. The women at SDAC

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Land Grant Act (or Morrill Act) of 1862 provided each state with funds for at least one college “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” (U. S., *Statutes at Large*, vol. 12, Act of 2 July 1862, p. 504).



Lulah Wellman, the college's first woman graduate, received her degree in August 1888.

clearly recognized that they faced barriers and contested many of them with vigor. At the same time, they accepted as a matter of course attitudes and practices that, from a modern-day perspective, would be perceived as biased and restrictive. The "Emancipation of Woman" essay, by junior Amy Ladd, is a case in point. For all its celebration of the "new woman," the essay was essentially conservative, cautioning the college woman to "understand clearly that the further emancipation of woman does not mean equality with men" and that a woman's chief abiding interest should be the home.<sup>4</sup> Some of the women students were trailblazers, aspiring to careers in science or medicine, but most chose the traditional fields the college sanctioned, such as home economics or education. They managed, nevertheless, to make the most of their college experience, usually with enthusiasm and resolve, serving as worthy role models for future students.

The history of higher education for American women goes back to 1837, when women first entered the collegiate program at Oberlin College in Ohio. Vassar College, founded in New York State in 1865, held the distinction of being the first accredited women's college in the United States. The first state universities to admit females (from 1855 to 1870) were Iowa, Wisconsin, Kansas, Indiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Michigan, and California.<sup>5</sup> Most historical studies have focused on women's colleges and the large state universities. Notable among them is *In the Company of Educated Women* by Barbara Miller Solomon, who emphasizes men's and women's separate spheres of activity and the cold reception women students often received at early coeducational institutions. Lynn D. Gordon, in *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era*, corroborates Solomon's findings, providing examples of the "hostility, ridicule, and neglect" pioneer women students experienced at universities such as Wisconsin, Michigan, and Cornell. These college women were often excluded from social and extracurricular activities and, in some cases, were forced to attend separate classes.<sup>6</sup>

4. Ladd, "The Emancipation of Woman."

5. Rita S. Saslaw, "Oberlin College," *Historical Dictionary of Women's Education in the United States*, ed. Linda Eisenmann (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 313; Mabel Newcomer, *A Century of Higher Education for American Women* (New York: Harper, 1959), pp. 12–14.

6. Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985); Lynn D. Gor-

Scholars have identified the women enrolled in college from around 1890 to 1920 as belonging to the second and third generations of females attending institutions of higher education.<sup>7</sup> These women were generally spared the hostility and wholesale exclusion their predecessors experienced. Thus, Dakota Agricultural College, opening its doors a few decades after the earliest coeducational institutions, managed to provide a more welcoming environment, albeit one that still harbored inherent biases. From the beginning, men and women were channeled into separate fields of study. Many activities were directed toward the male students, as material in the college's newspaper, annual catalog, yearbook, and alumni magazine reveals.<sup>8</sup> The men's academic, athletic, and military programs and accomplishments were covered in greater depth than were the activities and achievements of female students. However, as a small school, with men and women living in close proximity, attending classes together, and participating in social activities, the college offered opportunities for its female students and fostered gender integration to a degree not found in larger institutions. As far as can be judged from their own accounts, published as memoirs or appearing in various college publications, the women students do not seem to have harbored many feelings of isolation or resentment.

Interaction between the sexes was especially notable in the first few weeks of the school's history. The women entering in the fall of 1885 were obliged to live with the men in the college's sole building, later known as "Old Central," until the first women's dormitory, "Old South," was finished at Thanksgiving of that year. By 1897, the college's growing numbers and lack of space necessitated the conversion of dormitories into classrooms, and students had to make off-campus rooming arrangements. Not until the completion of Wenona Hall in 1908 (and Wecota Hall in 1916) did the college women once again have a dormitory of their own.<sup>9</sup>

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don, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 22 (quotation). See also Linda Eisenmann, "Reconsidering a Classic: Assessing the History of Women's Higher Education a Dozen Years after Barbara Solomon," *Harvard Educational Review* 67 (Winter 1997): 689-717.

7. See, for example, Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, p. 95, and Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education*, p. 5.

8. An article appearing in the 5 Aug. 1896 *Industrial Collegian* is typical. Called "Choosing a Profession," it began, "To every young man, sooner or later, comes the duty of choosing his vocation for life."

9. Robert F. Kerr, "The Founding," in *A History of South Dakota State College*, ed. William

Even with men and women students living in separate dormitories or scattered throughout the town of Brookings, they managed to find opportunities for socializing. Neva Whaley Harding, an 1897 graduate, addressed this subject in her memoir. "The real social centers were the two literary societies, the Miltonian and the Athenian, which met every week for programs and gay times," she recalled. "There was no drinking, smoking, card playing or dancing allowed up until 1893. Lights had to be out at 10:00 p.m., every one in his room or accounted for; but we were very happy and enjoyed ourselves. Of course it was fun, at times, to evade the strict rules. Sometimes a bunch of us would slip down to the creamery where a couple of the boys roomed, to do a little dancing."<sup>10</sup>

The literary societies played an important role in the early years of the institution. Although women were at first excluded and then relegated to a subordinate role, they eventually took an equal part and often held leadership positions. The college's 1904 yearbook outlined the organizations' origins, beginning with the Lyceum in the fall of 1885: "By a majority vote, the girls not voting, the original constitution was amended so as to make only male students eligible to membership. Twelve boys and twelve girls not approving of this action met a few days later and organized the Athenian Society."<sup>11</sup> The depleted Lyceum died out, leaving only the Athenians until the formation of the Miltonian Society in November 1887. Both groups remained strong for the next three decades, outlasting several others that sprang up in the intervening years.

Society meetings included musical entertainment, oratory, and debates, although the Miltonian women were not allowed to debate until the spring of 1890.<sup>12</sup> That year, the question of women's suffrage was a popular topic, spurred perhaps by Susan B. Anthony's 20 November 1889 visit to the college to advocate for women's voting rights. The *Collegian* announced in its April 1890 issue that public opinion on the subject was nearly evenly divided but concluded that the majority of the judges "seem to jump on the 'band wagon' and shout for the enfranchisement of wom-

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H. Powers (Brookings: South Dakota State College, 1931), pp. 9, 12; South Dakota Agricultural College (SDAC) annual catalog (1897-1898), p. 57; South Dakota State College (SDSC) annual catalog, (1908-1909), p. 20, (1916-1917), p. 25.

10. Harding, *I Recall Pioneer Days in South Dakota* (1961; rev. ed., Brookings, S.Dak.: Woman's Club and Saturday Literary Club, 1972), p. 23.

11. "Athenian History," *Quirt* (1904), n.p. The college's yearbook was known as the *Quirt* for only one year.

12. *Dakota Collegian*, May 1890.

en." There were, as well, more frivolous debate topics, such as "Resolved, that a girl is more afraid of a rat, than a rat is afraid of a girl." The question was decided for the negative.<sup>13</sup>

A related activity in which the women students took part was oratory. Beginning in 1888, the college held an annual oratory competition each spring, with the winner representing the college at the state contest. In April 1889, three men and, for the first time, four women, competed. Among them were May Cranston, who selected "Higher Education of Women" as her subject, and Sarah Haber, who received second place for her delivery on "Marriage and Divorce."<sup>14</sup> Six years later, Mabel Mayland won the college contest and went on to represent SDAC at the state level. When she was denied victory, as the "Decision against Woman" headline announced in the June 1895 *Collegian*, the newspaper took one of the judges to task, contending, "If Mr. Strickland could not cast a vote of more than 50 per cent on delivery for our orator simply because she was a lady, and if he said he could not vote in favor of woman because he was prejudiced against her, he should have resigned his position as a judge and taken his seat with the audience, instead of casting his vote to discourage the higher education of woman. If the ladies of our schools and colleges are to be encouraged in their educational work they must be given what they justly deserve, otherwise there is no incentive to spur on the desire to strive for something higher."<sup>15</sup>

Another force promoting the interests of women students was the female faculty. During the college's first thirty-five years, women, many of whom were hired as instructors or assistants, averaged around 20 percent of the total faculty. Nancy Van Doren, Nellie Folsom, and Ada B. Caldwell were three early faculty members who, in addition to their other duties, served as preceptress (a precursor to dean of women). Van Doren, working at an annual salary of five hundred dollars, was the first female instructor and, in fact, the first salaried faculty member hired after the appointment of George Lilley, the college's earliest president. Until 1887, Van Doren taught English grammar, composition, and rhetoric, besides overseeing the college women. She subsequently served as librarian until leaving for Washington Agricultural College in 1890. Van Doren had a young son whom she raised with the assistance of her brother and his

13. *Ibid.*, May 1887, Nov. 1889, Apr. 1890.

14. *Ibid.*, Apr. 1889.

15. *Industrial Collegian*, 1 June 1895.



Seated at far right is Mabel Mayland, whom the August 1895 *Industrial Collegian* lauded as a “natural orator.” She graduated at age seventeen.

family. Former students Fanny Shannon and John Merton Aldrich remembered her fondly, although Aldrich’s diary accounts reveal that he spent much of his time attempting to circumvent her strict rules governing visitation of the women’s dormitory.<sup>16</sup>

Nellie Folsom, a graduate of Saint Lawrence University in Canton, New York, began work at the agricultural college in the fall of 1887. Replacing Van Doren as preceptress, she was also professor of English language and literature. Like her predecessor, Folsom took her role of supervising the women seriously and strictly enforced the dormitory rules, especially the ten o’clock evening curfew.<sup>17</sup> Besides Folsom’s “gentle, firm hand” with

16. Kerr, “Founding,” p. 6; *Dakota Collegian*, Mar. 1890; *South Dakota State College Alumnus* 3 (Nov. 1912): 10–11; *ibid.* 46 (Feb. 1956): 12; Aldrich Diary (transcript), 8, 9 Dec. 1885, 5 Apr. 1887, Archives/Special Collections, Hilton M. Briggs Library, South Dakota State University (SDSU), Brookings, S. Dak.

17. *South Dakota State College Alumnus* 40 (May 1950): 11; Harding, *I Recall Pioneer Days*, pp. 23–24.



the dormitory women, Neva Whaley Harding remembered with appreciation her classes in American literature, the English poets, and Latin.<sup>18</sup> Folsom, celebrated in the college's alumni magazine as "universally loved and admired by her students,"<sup>19</sup> taught at SDAC until her marriage in 1899 to Edgar A. Burnett, professor of animal husbandry and dairy science. That fall, the couple moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, where Edgar Burnett had accepted a position at the University of Nebraska. After many years as professor and then dean of the Agricultural College, he became university chancellor from 1927 to 1938. Folsom gave up her teaching career when she married, staying at home and raising their son.<sup>20</sup>

18. Harding, "Memories of SDSC from 1891 to 1893," *South Dakota State Alumnus* [52] (Sept. 1961): 7.

19. *Alumnus* 6 (May 1915): 21.

20. *Industrial Collegian*, Oct. 1899; *South Dakota State College Alumnus* 40 (May 1950): 11.



The college faculty in 1889 included four women: (from left) Nancy Van Doren, library; Dalinda Mason, domestic science; Nellie Folsom, English; and Mary Lapham, music.

Ada Caldwell, trained at the Chicago Institute of Art, headed the SDAC art department from 1899 to 1937. She served as preceptress from 1908 to 1911 and again from 1914 to 1917. In addition to her professional duties, she held leadership roles in the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the State Federation of Women's Clubs. At her death in 1938, the *Alumnus* overflowed with tributes to this beloved teacher, praising her dedication to art, her students, and the college. C. Louise Phillips Corbett, a 1901 graduate, described Caldwell as "the one professor who stands out above all others in my memory as coming closer to my life and inspiring me to a broader, fuller and more beautiful life." Many of the women echoed Corbett's sentiments, recalling Caldwell's gifts as a teacher and the great influence she had had on them.<sup>21</sup>

Another notable woman faculty member was long-time professor of physical education Nellie Kendall, a 1908 graduate of the college. Several physical education instructors had preceded her, all but one of whom had teaching duties in other disciplines. In its early years, physical education (then called physical culture) was allied successively with the English, music, and elocution departments. Not until 1919 did women's physical education finally become an independent department, with Kendall assuming its directorship in 1921. Forty-five years later, a scholarship was established in her name for women majoring in physical education.<sup>22</sup>

Athletics proved a valuable opportunity for the college women, although the men's athletic program certainly received more support and coverage. Physical education for women made its first appearance at SDAC in 1894.<sup>23</sup> Two years later the *Collegian* proclaimed: "The young ladies' class in physical culture is booming this term and the aisles and stage of the chapel are filled to overflowing, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, with enthusiastic 'coeds.' A combination of the German and Swedish gymnastic systems is being used by the class, in addition to the Delsarte exercises. . . . The girls of the S.D.A.C. will continue to grow healthier, handsomer and wiser, as they clink their dumb bells, swing

21. "A Tribute Becomes a Memorial," *State College Alumnus* 29 (Dec. 1938): 3-10 (quotation on p. 9). Among Caldwell's pupils were Hubert Mathieu, Gilbert Riswold, and Harvey Dunn, all of whom went on to become notable artists.

22. Nellie Kendall, *Women's Physical Education*, vol. 7 of *History of S.D.S.C.* (Brookings: South Dakota State College, 1930), pp. 1-2; *South Dakota State University Alumnus* 57 (Oct. 1966): 8.

23. Kendall, *Women's Physical Education*, p. 1.

their clubs and march with fancy step to the merry tunes which come from the old chapel piano."<sup>24</sup>

The enthusiasm for physical exercise at the college also manifested itself in bicycling and basketball. With the demise of the highwheel bicycle and the advent of the safety bicycle and pneumatic tires in the 1880s, bicycling became practicable for the average person. Female riders at first encountered some resistance, however. Questions were raised as to what constituted proper riding costumes and whether women should use a sidesaddle. Practicality would eventually win out, as an 1895 article in *Scribner's* magazine predicted. "No one costume may yet claim to represent the pastime, for experiment is still busy with the problem, but the results are in the direction of simplicity," the writer attested. "Skirts, unless frankly shortened or discarded, must be fashioned so as to minimize the danger of entanglement with the flying wheel. Knickerbockers, bloomers, and the skirt made of twin philabegs, all have their advocates . . . . The occasional denunciation of the pastime as unwomanly, is fortunately lost in the general approval that a new and wholesome recreation has been found, whose pursuit adds joy and vigor to the dowry of the race."<sup>25</sup>

Professor Nellie Folsom was one of the first women at SDAC to purchase a bicycle. She soon became "quite proficient in riding," reported the *Collegian* in September 1890. Two of Folsom's former students later recalled the striking impression she made. C. H. Robertson, class of 1893, remembered the day when "our beautiful, dainty Women's Dorm 'Preceptress' came riding up the sidewalk on the new fangled balloon tired 'Safety' bicycle." Willard Dillman, who attended SDAC in 1891 and 1892, described Folsom as a "social star," who "on fine days caused more than a flutter by whisking past us on her noiseless safety bicycle."<sup>26</sup> The bicycle fad among women faculty continued throughout the decade. In 1893, the *Collegian* announced that "Misses Barton and Harkins have each a new 'Rambler' bicycle and are learning to ride with ease."<sup>27</sup> This assertion

24. *Industrial Collegian*, 4 Apr. 1896. François Delsarte was a nineteenth-century French teacher of pantomime and gymnastics.

25. Marguerite Merington, "Woman and the Bicycle," *Scribner's* 17 (June 1895): 703. A philabeg, or filibeg, is a kilt.

26. *Dakota Collegian*, Sept. 1890; Robertson, "Early Life at S.D.A.C.," *South Dakota State College Alumnus* 35 (Sept. 1944): 6; Dillman, *A Human Life: Memories of a Pioneer* (Excelsior, Minn.: Record Office, 1934), p. 137.

27. *Industrial Collegian*, 1 July 1893. Carrie Barton taught Industrial Art at SDAC from 1893

proved a little too glib, however. In May 1895, the *Collegian* noted, "Miss Barton has been confined to her room for a few days while recovering from a tumble from her wheel. All is well and danger all past, but wheeling is poor in South Dakota."<sup>28</sup>

The 1890s also brought women's basketball to SDAC, the sport having been developed early in the decade. The September 1896 *Collegian* announced that the women's class in physical culture was organizing a basketball team, despite a lack of facilities. One month later the newspaper reported, "Three teams have been organized from the Freshman, Sophomore, and Junior Classes, and by the kindness of Profs. Saunders and Solberg the ground has been prepared so that the game can now be played out of doors. Several exciting games have been played, the majority of which have resulted in ties, except the game played between the Faculty ladies and a pick-up team, when the score stood 6 to 9 in favor of the 'pick-ups.'"<sup>29</sup>

In 1897, the college women began playing competitively, and a state meet, which became an annual tradition, was held at Mitchell that spring.<sup>30</sup> Myra Fishback, a 1901 graduate, was captain of the women's basketball team in 1900. Forty-five years later she proudly recalled winning the state championship and wondered, "How did we ever play with those full, heavy bloomers and skirts, and long black stockings?"<sup>31</sup> The state meets were discontinued in 1908. Not until 1966 was women's basketball restored as a competitive sport.<sup>32</sup>

From 1909 to 1919, no physical education for women was taught at the college.<sup>33</sup> In 1914, an article in the *Collegian* revealed that there was still

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until 1897. Previously, she was an instructor in clay modeling and wood carving at the University of Nebraska, where she completed a life-size statue, *The Young Athlete*, for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. *South Dakota Collegian*, Mar. 1893. Lilla Harkins was head of the domestic economy department. For more information on Harkins, see footnote 46.

28. *Industrial Collegian*, 18 May 1895.

29. *Ibid.*, Sept., Oct. 1896. De Alton Saunders was professor of botany and entomology, and Halvor Christian Solberg was professor of mechanical and steam engineering.

30. *Ibid.*, May 1897.

31. "Who's Who among State Alumni," *Alumnus* 35 (May 1945): 2. After graduation, Fishback was the YWCA secretary for North Dakota. She married Melville T. Kennedy in 1909 and lived for many years in Calcutta, India, where her husband was engaged in YWCA work. *Alumnus* 9 (Aug. 1918): 11.

32. Sara J. Cepek, "The History of Women's Basketball at South Dakota State University" (master's thesis, South Dakota State University, 1997), pp. 36–38.

33. Kendall, *Women's Physical Education*, p. 2.



Myra Fishback, holding the basketball, posed with her teammates for their championship photograph in 1900.

enthusiasm for women's physical training on campus: "Why can the girls not have better equipment? Why not a physical trainer? And why not have the gym work required and morning periods reserved for it next year?"<sup>34</sup> Two years later, the women were still lobbying for compulsory physical training. "With a third the time and money that is spent on the boys," they reasoned, "a training can be furnished to the girls of the college which will permit them to realize their best."<sup>35</sup>

These articles promoting women's athletics were published in special issues of the *Collegian*, staffed and written solely by the college women to highlight their activities. The first "co-ed edition" was issued in April 1913. "Whether we are grateful or not for the privilege of preparing a number of the paper," the editorial declared, "we, the girls, thank the male faction of the staff for stepping aside and allowing us to use our devastating skill on the unready readers."<sup>36</sup> It was not uncommon for the women students

34. *Industrial Collegian*, 21 Apr. 1914.

35. *Ibid.*, 2 May 1916.

36. *Ibid.*, 22 Apr. 1913.

to express their views in regular issues of the *Collegian* as well, even though male students, by convention, held the top editing spot until Bee Bonesteel became editor-in-chief in 1905. Early issues of the college newspaper contained a number of essays by female students in which they expressed their attitudes on women's roles and status, usually ending with some degree of optimism.

Minnie Stoner's essay, "Scientific Women," appeared in the March 1890 *Collegian*. The essay focused on astronomer Maria Mitchell and on women in medicine, including Elizabeth Blackwell, who, in 1847, was the first woman in America to receive a formal medical degree. Stoner identified Mitchell, the first professional female astronomer, discoverer of a comet, and professor at Vassar College, as foremost among the country's women of science. "In this age it is no longer a question 'has woman ability,'" Stoner declared, "but it is a verified fact she possesses true intelligence, culture, usefulness, genius and morals equal to that of man when given the same privileges."<sup>37</sup>

Sarah ("Jennie") Chamberlain began her essay "The Mission of Educated Women" in the June 1890 *Collegian* by decrying women's historically subordinate status. As the end of the nineteenth century approached, however, she saw signs that women were beginning to prevail over long-held prejudices and credited "the quickening power of the new education" as the chief motivating force in elevating women. "There is a special need at present for highly educated women in many of our professions," she asserted. "We do not believe in subjecting all women to the same round of studies, but we do believe that to the fullest and completest educational advantages she must be freely admitted. . . . Every year widens the field for woman, making her mission greater and more responsible."<sup>38</sup>

Women in the professions was not merely a topic for student essays. Many females from the college's early graduating classes went on to have distinguished careers as teachers, professors, dietitians, physicians, librarians, stenographers, school principals, and missionaries. Minnie Stoner, who graduated in 1890, became a professor of domestic science at various universities in Ohio, Wyoming, Oklahoma, and North Dakota.

37. *Dakota Collegian*, Mar. 1890.

38. *Ibid.*, June 1890. Chamberlain also won the college-wide oratorical contest in 1890 for her eulogy of Susan B. Anthony. *Ibid.*, Nov. 1890.

She later served as administrator and instructor in medical dietetics at the University of Colorado's Medical College.<sup>39</sup>

Jennie Chamberlain, class of 1891, was one of three early women graduates of SDAC to enter the medical profession. While a student, she was entrusted with the meteorological observations of the Dakota Experiment Station. Having spent her school vacations teaching, she became matron of the Jacksonville Female Academy in Illinois upon graduation. A few years later, Chamberlain entered Hahnemann Medical College and Hospital in Chicago, graduating in 1897. Marrying physician Henry M. Spooner the following year, she continued working as a doctor, first in Chicago, then Stevens Point, Wisconsin, and finally in Michigan, where she remained for nearly thirty years. In 1916, she mentioned in a letter to the college's *Alumnus* newsletter that she was conducting a private maternity hospital in Detroit.<sup>40</sup>

Annie Louise Wardall, an 1889 graduate, was the least conventional practitioner of the three early SDAC women who pursued medical careers. The November 1897 *Collegian* announced that she was conducting Christian Science healing in Topeka, Kansas. After her marriage around 1900, Annie Wardall Scott worked as an osteopath in Seattle. In 1919, the *Alumnus* reported that she was recovering from nervous strain after seven years of caring for her ailing father, mother, and grandfather. The other early SDAC alumna to become a physician was Emma Adelaide Keeney, who graduated in 1892. After studying medicine in Minneapolis, she served as a doctor in Minnesota and Oregon.<sup>41</sup>

Women physicians were not uncommon during the late nineteenth century, a time when the number of female doctors in the United States grew from less than twenty-five hundred in 1880 to over nine thousand in 1910. This trend was not sustained, however. By the 1890s, coeducational university medical schools, stricter licensing standards for physicians, and the rising costs of medical education were leading to the closing of

39. SDAC annual catalogs (1895–1896), (1897–1898), (1904–1905); SDSC annual catalog (1910–1911); *Alumnus* 3 (May 1912): 21; *ibid.* 7 (Aug. 1916): 11; *ibid.* 10 (May 1919): 30.

40. *Dakota Collegian*, Aug. 1891; *American Medical Directory* (Chicago: American Medical Association, 1916), p. 792; *Industrial Collegian*, Apr. 1905; *Alumnus* 2 (May 1911): 7; *ibid.* 7 (Aug. 1916): 12; *State College Alumnus* 28 (Mar. 1938): 16.

41. *Industrial Collegian*, Nov. 1897, Apr. 1905, Mar. 1909; *Alumnus* 6 (Aug. 1915): 6; *ibid.* 7 (Feb. 1916): 14; *ibid.* 10 (May 1919): 27; "A Directory of the Alumni," *State College Alumnus* 20 (Dec. 1929).



After graduating in 1892, Emma Adelaide Keeney pursued her interest in elocution before entering the medical profession.

“irregular” medical schools, many of which were women’s medical colleges or had a large percentage of women students. By 1904, 84 percent of female medical students were attending university medical schools, leaving only three women’s medical schools still open in the United States. The university institutions, however, admitted women in far fewer numbers than had been allowed to enroll in the women’s medical col-



leges. Further, the growing perception of medicine as a male preserve may have kept many women from aspiring to enter the field. From 1894 to 1913, the total number of women medical students fell from 1,419 to 526.<sup>42</sup>

Related to the image of certain professions as male was the perceived "feminization" of other occupations. Teaching, nursing, social work, and librarianship were among the professions primarily filled by women and, as a consequence, somewhat devalued. Even in these predominantly female occupations, men tended to receive higher salaries, as Marie Huntimer Taylor, a 1920 graduate of the college, pointed out in the March 1938 *Alumnus*. Specifically, she was troubled that women teachers in South Dakota did not receive the same pay as men. Teaching was the most common vocation for the college's women graduates, a fact that held true for alumnae throughout the United States, as several surveys confirmed. An Association of College Alumnae (ACA) study of thirty-five hundred graduates from 1869 to 1898 found that 72.4 percent had taught. A 1915 ACA census of nearly seventeen thousand graduates of eight women's colleges and one coeducational university (Cornell) revealed that of those who had ever been gainfully employed, 83.5 percent had taught. Finally, a 1928 survey of alumnae of land-grant institutions found that 58.3 percent of those currently employed were teaching.<sup>43</sup>

Among the early women graduates of South Dakota's land-grant institution, teaching home economics became an increasingly popular career choice. The college was the first in the state to offer a degree in what was then known as domestic economy. Although its title underwent several name changes, the major remained popular throughout the college's history.<sup>44</sup> In the 1890s, Neva Whaley Harding took the course, as did all fe-

42. Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, p. 132; Mary Roth Walsh, "Doctors Wanted: No Women Need Apply": *Sexual Barriers in the Medical Profession, 1835-1975* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 240, table 8; Thomas Neville Bonner, *To the Ends of the Earth: Women's Search for Education in Medicine* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 156.

43. *State College Alumnus*, 28 (Mar. 1938): 17; Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, pp. 127-28; Mary Van Kleeck, "A Census of College Women," *Journal of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae* 11 (May 1918): 560; Chase Going Woodhouse, *After College—What?: A Study of 6665 Land-Grant College Women, Their Occupations, Earnings, Families, and Some Undergraduate and Vocational Problems*, Institute of Women's Professional Relations Bulletin no. 4 (Greensboro: North Carolina College for Women, 1932), p. 5.

44. The name changed from domestic economy to domestic science in 1898. It was re-

male students during the school's first dozen years. The college's first annual catalog set forth its pedagogical objectives for female students: "Not merely to adorn the young woman for social life, but to strengthen and develop her mental powers in actually the same ratio as the young man's, fitting her to fill any branch of industry that may be opened to her as well as preparing her for the more important position of caring for the home. This course is in the main identical with the course for young men for the first two years, with a stronger tendency toward the classical, and providing also opportunity for instruction in Domestic Economy and advancement in the Fine Arts during the last two years of College life."<sup>45</sup>

Harding characterized the course of study similarly in her later reminiscence, describing it as being "the same as for the boys except the girls were required to take sewing and cooking, and the boys, farm work and shop." She fondly remembered her domestic economy teacher, Lilla Harkins, who, still in her twenties, was affectionately called "Ma Harkins."<sup>46</sup> After detailing her own cooking trials, Harding ruefully concluded that some of her fellow students must have taken their training more seriously than she had. She cited the case of Edith Salisbury Robertson, class of 1895, who organized the first department of domestic economy at Purdue University.<sup>47</sup>

Home economics was just emerging as a discipline in the late nineteenth century. Margaret W. Rossiter, in her *Women Scientists in America*, credits Ellen Swallow Richards with almost single-handedly creating the field, noting that "between 1880 and 1910 she . . . propagandized for it, ran demonstration projects, raised money, performed many chemical

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named home economics in 1906 and family and consumer sciences in 1996. SDAC annual catalogs (1897-1898), (1905-1906); *South Dakota State University Bulletin*, 1998-2000.

45. *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Dakota Agricultural College for the Academic Year 1885*, p. 16.

46. Harding, "Memories of SDSC," p. 6. Harkins, head of the domestic economy department from 1890 to 1896, received her bachelor's degree from SDAC in 1890 and M.S. degree in 1898. She subsequently served as professor of domestic science at the State Industrial College of Louisiana and at Montana Agricultural College, as home economics director for the state of Montana, and as domestic science demonstration agent in Forest Hills, New York. *Dakota Collegian*, Aug. 1890, *Industrial Collegian*, Oct. 1896; *Alumnus* 3 (May 1912): 20; *ibid.* 9 (Feb. 1918): 11.

47. Harding, "Memories of SDSC," pp. 6-7; *South Dakota State College Alumnus* 44 (Dec. 1953): 6. After several years at Purdue, Salisbury accompanied her husband, Clarence H. Robertson, abroad, where he worked for the YMCA and did missionary work in China, Japan, Russia, and the Philippine Islands. *South Dakota State College Alumnus* 43 (Oct. 1952): 10.

analyses, wrote several handbooks, trained and inspired her coworkers, and organized its main activities and professional associations." At the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, Richards ran a "Rumford Kitchen" that offered visitors "nutritious and scientifically cooked lunches" for thirty-two cents.<sup>48</sup> Lilla Harkins, while professor of domestic economy at SDAC, toured the Rumford Kitchen during her visit to the World's Fair.<sup>49</sup>

Modern-day critics often point out the mixed results that came with the rise of home economics as an academic field. "The small cadre of highly educated women who joined Richards," writes Mary Roth Walsh, "no doubt felt they were responding to a social need—educating women to be better wives and mothers. It just happened, however, that the home economics movement meshed in many ways with the ideology of antifem-

48. Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 68–69.

49. *Industrial Collegian*, 2 Sept. 1893.



Students cultivate their cooking skills in the home economics laboratory around 1910.

inists who argued that motherhood and housewifery alone should be the careers women should follow.”<sup>50</sup> Another concern was that the popularity of home economics discouraged college women from pursuing other scientific disciplines. Rossiter makes this argument, observing that home economics “was the only field where a woman scientist could hope to be a full professor, department chairman, or even a dean in the 1920s and 1930s.”<sup>51</sup>

Midwestern land-grant schools, in particular, tended to develop home economics programs for their women students, thus steering the sexes into separate career paths. Iowa State Agricultural College was the first to offer domestic economy at the college level. “If young men are to be educated to fit them for successful, intelligent, and practical farmers and mechanics,” the board of trustees reasoned, “is it not as essential that young women should be educated in a manner that will qualify them to properly understand and discharge their duties as wives of farmers and mechanics?”<sup>52</sup>

This relegation of women into traditional roles was in some ways furthered by two pieces of federal legislation. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 stipulated that all land-grant colleges cooperate with the United States Department of Agriculture in extending practical education in home economics and agriculture to persons outside the university, while the Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act of 1917 funded vocational education programs, including home economics, in public schools.<sup>53</sup> This emphasis on practical vocational training undercut the research, science-based orientation that had begun to develop in home economics programs in colleges and universities. Considering the Smith-Hughes Act, Rima D. Apple asserts that “it was not the social reform arguments of home economics reformers or their call for home economics as a science-based liberal arts education for girls that swayed the votes for passage. Rather, it was the traditional image of woman as wife and mother in need of technical training to run her home efficiently and healthfully.”<sup>54</sup>

50. Walsh, *Doctors Wanted*, pp. 189–90.

51. Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America*, p. 70.

52. Quoted in Ercel Sherman Eppright and Elizabeth Storm Ferguson, *A Century of Home Economics at Iowa State University: A Proud Past, a Lively Present, a Future Promise* (Ames: Iowa State University Home Economics Alumni Association, 1971), p. 4.

53. U. S., *Statutes at Large*, vol. 38, Act of 8 May 1914, pp. 372–73; *ibid.*, vol. 39, Act of 23 Feb. 1917, p. 929.

54. Apple, “Liberal Arts or Vocational Training?: Home Economics Education for Girls,”

These aspects of home economics education went unexamined, or at least unremarked, by the women at South Dakota's land-grant college, however. Whether or not this fact demonstrates that the women were conditioned to accept narrowly defined roles for themselves, articles appearing in the *Collegian* and *Alumnus*, such as Kate Farr's "The Necessity for a Knowledge of Domestic Science," were unified in their defense of home economics as a career choice and in affirming the importance of caring for the home.<sup>55</sup> After passage of the Smith-Lever and Smith-Hughes acts, the college's women graduates increasingly taught high-school home economics or served as home-extension agents. The 1920 graduating class, in which at least twenty-one of the twenty-eight women graduates taught home economics at some point in their careers, illustrates the popularity of the home economics course.<sup>56</sup>

One of the most acclaimed early home economics alumnae was Ethel Austin Martin, a 1916 graduate of the college that had come to be known as South Dakota State College (SDSC). Martin served on the nutrition staffs and home economics departments of the University of Illinois, University of Chicago, and Northwestern University. From 1929 to 1951, she was director of nutrition service for the National Dairy Council. In addition, she wrote several books on nutrition. She received a master of science degree from Columbia University in 1923 and, in 1955, an honorary doctor of science degree from SDSC. Martin was not the only early woman graduate to receive an honorary doctorate from her alma mater. In 1952, Amy Kelly, class of 1908, received the degree for her home economics extension work in Idaho, Kansas, and Missouri.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the popularity of home economics courses in the college's early history, a few women students followed different routes. In 1890, a lone unidentified female student pursued her interest in surveying. "The sur-

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*Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 87.

55. *Dakota Collegian*, Oct. 1890.

56. Statistics for the college's 1920 graduates were obtained from alumni directories published in the annual catalog from 1895-1896 until 1921-1922 and subsequently in the *Alumnus* newsletter for December of 1929, 1931, and 1934; May 1937, 1948, and 1959; and February 1970.

57. "Who's Who among State Alumni," *South Dakota State College Alumnus* 36 (Feb. 1946): 2; *ibid.* 42 (Nov. 1951): 9; *ibid.* 42 (June 1952): 8; *ibid.* 45 (June 1955): 10. Martin's books include *Nutrition in Action* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963) and *Roberts' Nutrition Work with Children* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

veying class this year numbers eight boys and one girl," observed the college newspaper. "Miss Nellie seems to be keeping up with the boys in mathematics, even though she be a girl."<sup>58</sup> Nina Updyke, a student from 1887 to 1890, had been the first woman to enroll in an engineering class at the college. In 1890, she transferred to Yankton College, where she planned to pursue scientific studies. In 1922, Helen Millett completed the engineering course at SDSC. Ten years later, the *Alumnus* recognized Genevieve Rose as the first woman to receive a degree in civil engineering. In 1935, Mariann Milliman became the second SDSC woman to major in that field.<sup>59</sup>

Several early women graduates taught at the college level. Although home economics was the most popular discipline, it was certainly not the only option, as the career of Ethel Sanborn, a 1903 graduate, proved. Sanborn spent most of her professional life teaching in the botany departments at the University of Oregon and Oregon State College. Before beginning her teaching career, she held down a claim near Date in Perkins County, South Dakota. In 1929, Sanborn received her Ph.D. from Stanford University, becoming the first woman graduate of South Dakota's land-grant college to earn a doctorate. Lulu Casley Spilde, class of 1914, earned a Ph.D. from New York University in 1942. Throughout her career, Spilde variously served as a teacher, principal, dean of women, and professor of education. In 1946, she joined the faculty at Saint John's University in Brooklyn, New York, where she became chairman of the department of education and director of teacher training.<sup>60</sup> Other college disciplines taught by early women graduates included physical education, history, and art.

Two of the national surveys cited above provide valuable insight into the lives and careers of early female college graduates. The Association of Collegiate Alumnae survey in 1915 polled 16,739 alumnae, most of whom had graduated from women's colleges. Of these women, 69.7 percent had been gainfully employed at some point in their lives. At the time of the survey, 42.7 percent were working, 70.3 percent as teachers and 29.7

58. *Dakota Collegian*, July 1890.

59. *Ibid.*, Sept. 1890; *South Dakota State College Alumnus* 33 (Nov. 1942): 6; *ibid.* 33 (July 1943): 10; *Alumnus* 13 (May 1922): 24; *State College Alumnus* 23 (Sept. 1932): 12.

60. *Alumnus* 2 (May 1911): 16; *ibid.* 3 (May 1912): 13; *South Dakota State College Alumnus* 43 (Jan. 1953): 6; "Who's Who among State Alumni," *South Dakota State College Alumnus* 46 (Nov. 1955): 2-3.



The two women in this photograph of the 1889 civil engineering class are (from left) Nina Updyke and Alice Robinson.

percent in other occupations. In order of popularity, these occupations included social service, library work, and business. The study revealed only one woman engineer and four architects. Eighty-five women were engaged in scientific pursuits, and another eighty-four were in medicine.<sup>61</sup>

61. Van Kleeck, "A Census of College Women," pp. 558, 560, 562, 564-66.

In 1928, the Institute of Women's Professional Relations surveyed 6,665 alumnae from land-grant institutions, including SDSC, for information on occupations and marriage rates. These women had graduated during four selected periods (1889–1892, 1899–1902, 1909–1912, and 1919–1922). At the time of the study, 54.7 percent were working in paid positions, and 81.8 percent had worked at some point after graduation. Again, teaching was the most common occupation. Of those currently working, 58.3 percent were teachers, two-thirds of them in high schools. Of the remainder, 36.7 percent were in professional work (including librarianship, health work, and social work), 43 percent in commercial and business positions, and 20.3 percent in home economics-related positions other than teaching. Slightly more than half—53.3 percent—of the women were married at the time of the survey. Of the married women, 20 percent were in paid occupations.<sup>62</sup>

At SDSC, the average marriage rate of alumnae who graduated between 1888 and 1920 was 78 percent, somewhat higher than the women in the 1928 land-grant survey but lower than the national rate for women, which hovered around 90 percent. The women graduating between 1901 and 1910 had the lowest average marriage rate (64.7 percent) of the college's early decades, a statistic that coincides with national trends. Even among the general population, more women tended to marry later or not all during this period than in preceding or succeeding decades. One reason for this trend was an increase in employment opportunities and income for young, educated single women. As the twentieth century progressed, women again began to marry at higher rates and at lower ages—due, among other factors, to a growing acceptance of married women in the work force.<sup>63</sup>

A closer look at a specific graduating class from each of the college's first four decades reveals the types of marriage and career choices early

62. Woodhouse, *After College—What?*, pp. 5–6, 53, 56, 97. Sixty-seven percent of the 1889–1892 group, 62.4 percent of the 1899–1902 group, 67.5 percent of the 1909–1912 group, and 47.7 percent of the 1919–1922 group were married. Because the survey was conducted so soon after the graduation of the latter group, their marriage percentages were expected to increase over time. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

63. Mary E. Cookingham, "Bluestockings, Spinsters and Pedagogues: Women College Graduates, 1865–1910," *Population Studies* 38 (1984): 350–51, 360; Cookingham, "Combining Marriage, Motherhood, and Jobs before World War II: Women College Graduates, Classes of 1905–1935," *Journal of Family History* 9 (Summer 1984): 179, 194.



alumnae made. The 1889 class had seventeen graduates, eight of whom were women. This ratio of women (47.1 percent) is one of the highest of the college's early history. The marriage rate for the class was also higher than average, with all eight women marrying. One woman had married before beginning college, while three others married eleven or more years after graduation.

Several of these women taught, including Kate Boswell Arnold, who also worked in the dairy business in the 1930s. May Cranston Crane and Sarah Haber Cunningham are identified as housewives in the college's alumni directories. Grace Lawshe Brooke is likewise listed as a housewife in the early directories. Then, probably due to her husband's death, she entered the work force, serving as a preceptress in Valley City, North Dakota, and then at SDSC; a bookkeeper for an oil company in Duluth, Minnesota; and dean of women at the American College of Physical Education in Chicago. Carrie Orcutt was the wife of professor I. H. Orcutt, whom she had married before college. Nellie Roe died just eight years after graduating. She taught and served as assistant principal of the Brookings high school before marrying 1888 graduate John Merton Aldrich in 1893. Abbie Ross Wesche, sister of Carrie Orcutt, served as a missionary. She was in China in 1897 and in San Francisco in 1904.<sup>64</sup> As previously noted, Annie Wardall Scott pursued a career in medicine.

The class of 1897 had twenty-two graduates, seven of them women: Neva Whaley Harding, Christie Hargis, Cassie Madden, Eva Olson, Orpha West, Alice Wilcox, and Grace Young. Six of these women spent time as teachers. In addition, Cassie Madden Crowley pursued library work, serving in the University of Minnesota chemistry department for nearly thirty years before retiring in 1945. Eva Olson, the only woman to remain unmarried, became a school principal in South Saint Paul, Minnesota. Neva Whaley taught in De Smet, South Dakota, until her marriage to Albert Harding, an 1892 SDAC graduate and long-time history professor at the college.<sup>65</sup>

64. *State College Alumnus* 29 (July 1939): 13; SDAC annual catalogs (1895-1896), (1897-1898), (1904-1905); SDSC annual catalogs (1910-1911), (1922-1923); *Alumnus* 9 (May 1918): 18-19, 38; *ibid.* 15 (Nov. 1924): 21; *Dakota Collegian*, Aug. 1889, Mar. 1890; *Industrial Collegian*, Dec. 1897.

65. *South Dakota State College Alumnus* 48 (Feb. 1958): 13; *Alumnus* 5 (Aug. 1914): 13; *South Dakota State University Alumnus* 69 (Summer 1979): 16; SDAC annual catalog (1897-1898); *Brookings Register*, 5 Jan. 1978.



The first class in domestic science included five 1889 graduates: Annie Wardall (back middle), Abbie Ross (back right), Kate Boswell (middle left), and Grace Lawshe and Nellie Roe (front, from left). Teacher Dalinda Mason appears at middle right.

Nine of the twenty-eight graduates of the 1908 class were women. Of them, only two married, a rate of just 22.2 percent. Three of the women pursued careers in home economics. Hallie Hyde, student body president during her senior year, taught at the college level in Iowa, Idaho,

and Pennsylvania. Amy Kelly, recipient of the college's honorary doctor of science degree in 1952, performed university extension work in Idaho, Kansas, and Missouri. Beatrice Underwood taught home economics at the high-school level in South Dakota. She later worked as a missionary and teacher at an orphanage in Kodiak, Alaska, and then at Carson Indian School in Stewart, Nevada.<sup>66</sup>

Among the other 1908 graduates, three were teachers. Nellie Kendall spent her career teaching at SDSC, first in the School of Agriculture, then in the English department, and finally in the physical education department. Florence West worked as an assistant in the School of Agriculture at SDSC and then as an English teacher in New York. Ruby Williams, after receiving a master of science degree from the University of Chicago, taught in Los Angeles and married Frank Heil in 1916. Of the remaining 1908 alumnae, Edith Hubbard spent her career as a librarian, having taken advanced course work in Los Angeles. Amy Mayland died of pneumonia in February 1909 in Lincoln, Nebraska, where she was pursuing post-graduate studies in history. Lota Underwood, sister of fellow graduate Beatrice, married Orlin E. White in 1913 and accompanied her husband, a botanist, on plant-hunting expeditions throughout the world.<sup>67</sup>

The 1920 class had seventy-nine graduates, twenty-eight of them women. Twenty-four (85.7 percent) of these women married. As noted earlier, twenty-one (75 percent) spent some part of their careers in occupations related to home economics. Most of these women taught. In addition, Grace Rohrbach Lorbough worked as a dietitian; Frances Baker Gooch served as assistant director of textiles and clothing for the board of education of New York City; and Helen Day Lorbough and Edith Doolittle Sayre were employed as domestic-science demonstration agents. Myrtle Keck, after serving as a home economics instructor, did post-graduate work at Chicago and became assistant to the pastor of First Congregational Church in Quincy, Illinois. Of the remaining alumnae, four

66. *Jack Rabbit* (1909); *Alumnus* 3 (Nov. 1912): 14; *ibid.* 4 (Nov. 1913): 13; *ibid.* 11 (Nov. 1920): 10; *ibid.* 14 (Nov. 1923): 13; *ibid.* 15 (May 1924): 33; *South Dakota State Alumnus* [51] (June 1961): 8; "Who's Who among State Alumni," *South Dakota State College Alumnus* 33 (Apr. 1943): 2; *ibid.* 39 (Sept. 1948): 6; *South Dakota State University Alumnus* 69 (Spring 1979): 7; SDSC annual catalog (1922-1923); *State College Alumnus* 28 (Feb. 1938): 13.

67. *Alumnus* 3 (May 1912): 11; *ibid.* 3 (Nov. 1912): 4; *ibid.* 4 (Aug. 1913): 11; *ibid.* 8 (Feb. 1917): 8; *ibid.* 10 (Nov. 1919): 15; *ibid.* 13 (May 1922): 29; *ibid.* 14 (Feb. 1923): 19; *ibid.* 14 (Nov. 1923): 16; SDSC annual catalogs (1913-1914), (1922-1923); *State College Alumnus* 22 (June 1931): 25-26; *Industrial Collegian*, Feb. 1909; *South Dakota State Alumnus* [54] (Jan. 1964): 13.



Fifteen of the women pictured in this photograph of the home economics club were members of the class of 1920.

taught English. One, Florence Fryer, also taught high-school Latin in Keatakakua, Hawaii, and later worked as a librarian.<sup>68</sup>

It is, of course, hard to draw any definite statistical conclusions about the college's early women graduates from this limited sample. In addition to the scarcity of data is the difficulty of comparing these figures nationally. Among the individual colleges participating in national surveys, numbers differed widely. These variations may be due, in part, to the ages of the institutions and the graduates surveyed or, perhaps, to their economic status. Moreover, the national studies often used data from recent graduates, thus failing to account for marriages or career choices made later in life. Even so, the paths followed by the women of South Dakota's land-grant college appear to be essentially in line with the national trends, although teaching seemed to be even more prevalent among the college's alumnae than with women graduates in general, especially with home economics careers becoming so popular in the 1910s and 1920s.

68. "Directory," *State College Alumnus* 27 (May 1937), n.p.; *South Dakota State College Alumnus* 36 (Jan. 1946): 13; SDSC annual catalog (1922-1923); *Alumnus* 14 (Nov. 1923): 12; *ibid.* 17 (Aug. 1926): 32-33.

Statistics, however, fail to present the whole picture of South Dakota State University's women students during its first three decades. This examination of their lives both during and after college attests to these women's diverse talents and motivation to take advantage of the opportunities afforded them. Women pursuing scholarship and careers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries not only had to work hard for what they achieved but also had to contend with the attitudes of those who believed women's proper, and only, sphere should be the home. In the face of such obstacles, these early female graduates acquitted themselves well, thanks in part to the college's generally receptive environment. As Neva Whaley Harding recalled, "We were a group of young people rather above the average in ambition and with a burning desire for an education, willing to work and sacrifice for it."<sup>69</sup>

69. Harding, *I Recall Pioneer Days*, p. 24.