

THOSE EARLY DAYS

FRANCES A. POTTER (REYNOLDS), '74

[Frances Adelia Potter (Reynolds), '74, wife of H. S. Reynolds of the same class, was one of the first thirteen girls to enter the University in 1870. She is a writer of note in both prose and verse, and retains her keen interest in the University. The following reminiscences of the early life of the institution were written at the suggestion of President James, who noticed in one of her letters several bits of history and suggestions of others that alumni, especially of the older classes, will be interested in. Mrs. Reynolds lives in Providence, R. I.—EDITOR.]

At the age of fourteen years I attended, for one term, Allen's Grove academy in Wisconsin, and was enjoying my studies and music when I learned with dismay that I could not continue the winter term.

"We are going to move," my father told me. He further explained that a new state university was to be opened in the spring, and its regent was to be Dr. John M. Gregory, who had been in college with him. They had corresponded occasionally through all the years since Dr. Gregory's graduation. His last letter had contained the news, and the request that father would, if possible, join him in trying to make a successful start.

My father (Rev. Aaron Potter) and Dr. Gregory had both entered the Baptist ministry, and both had taught, but Dr. Gregory had remained in the educational field. He remembered my father as an excellent student of language in his college class, and intended to have him at the head of the department of the dead languages. So we left our home in Wisconsin and made preparations to go to Champaign.

I do not know just when Dr. Gregory discovered that he could not have as many associates as he had planned for. His plans were always broader than he was allowed to carry out. When we arrived in Champaign he said that the department he intended my father to take could not be started at once, but if he would assist him in another way until it became possible, he might help even more materially. He explained that adequate means for providing rooms and board for students near the university were lacking. It was his earnest desire that the boys coming from home for the first time might find a good home at reasonable rates. He proposed that father act as steward and that my mother take charge of the boarding hall. This seemed the most feasible thing for my parents to do, as they had already moved. In addition, they were anxious to assist Dr. Gregory in making a successful start.

We arrived in Champaign about midnight. Dr. Gregory met us at the station and, while my father attended to the baggage, took the baby from mother's arms and led the way, on foot, to the old Houston house on University ave. The baby cried, but Dr. Gregory would not give her up to my mother. He marched ahead and we followed, stumbling along over the ups and downs of the board walks. We had thought that we knew what mud was, but surely we had never seen real mud until we walked in Champaign.

As soon as our goods arrived, we began living in the University building. Notice I say *the* building, for there was but one. A large, plain, red brick five-story structure set down flat in the black Illinois mud, with not a tree or a shrub, a spear of grass or a fence. It was as desolate a place as it is possible to imagine. As for us, just from a pretty little village home, surrounded by trees and flowers, it was enough to make us homesick. But we were speedily too busy to be homesick.

We had for our private use a sitting-room, a sewing-room and three bedrooms on the second floor. Separated from them by a little hall was the large dining-room for the students. Later this became the library, and our rooms were combined and formed the art museum. In the basement was the long kitchen. A large dumb-waiter carried the food to the dining-room.

Dr. Gregory wanted the students to have home-like board at a reasonable price, and mother made every effort to carry out his wishes. I think the board was \$3 a week. We had a good cook, and tried to make the table attractive to the boys from the farms who had always had good living. In the dining-room were six and sometimes eight long tables, each accommodating ten persons. There were generally sixty or more at table for the first term. Professor Atherton boarded at the hall most of the time he was there. He and Professor Baker (not I. O.) were Dr. Gregory's only associates at the opening of the classes. Among the other boarders were Jim Mathews, Willie Reiss, James Graham, Abbott, Sawyer, Lawyer, and Will Hubbard. I presume they all remember bright, red-checked Lucy and her quiet assistant who waited on table.

Father and mother conducted the boarding hall for over a year before giving it up as impracticable. The boys then began boarding in clubs, or took care of themselves in their rooms, or roomed and boarded with nearby residents. But in that year and a half we were identified completely with the beginnings of things. Almost at once after we were established in our rooms in the spring of 1868 the students, about a hundred, began to come and register. On the 11th of March came the inauguration exercises, the anniversary of which was kept for years. The chapel in the fourth story was crowded; the corridors and stairs were crowded too. I do not remember the speakers or their addresses. I was especially interested in the music. Of the choir I remember particularly two singers—Mr. Rugg, a splendid bass, and a soprano who afterwards took the part of Queen in the cantata of Esther. The choir was led by George F. Root of Chicago, at the organ. Mr. Eppstein of Champaign, was at the piano. They gave some patriotic music, and then the University Anthem, written by Dr. Gregory. Having heard it as sung that first time I always felt the inadequacy of our university choir composed of young men and girls, as we sang the anthem on each anniversary; but I was always thrilled with it, as the words sang themselves into my very being.

The inauguration over, the regular business of the students' life began. Dr. Gregory taught history and some other studies the first term; Professor Baker, English. Professor Atherton taught Latin, and I do not remember what else. The next fall Dr. Burrill came, I believe, and Professor Shattuck

was soon on hand, teaching mathematics and military drill. Later, Professor Snyder had charge of the military department and taught German. Thomas I ranks was soon employed to lay out the grounds and take care of the greenhouse. At first all the boys were obliged to work two hours a day, but later only those who needed the money to help pay expenses were allowed to work. Great changes took place in the first few months. Fences were built. Trees and shrubs were set out. Grass was sown, and the refreshing green took the place of the mud. Gravel walks were laid out. Altogether, at the end of the second spring the surroundings were entirely changed.

While all this was going on the boys felt free to talk with my mother, and she took an interest in those first students she has never forgotten. They would come down often to get their cans filled from my father's kerosene barrel in the store room, would linger to talk, and would sometimes come into our sitting-room to sing. Mr. Franks had a fine tenor voice and he and several of the boys made good music when they called in on free evenings.

The boys often sang at other times too. A popular song of that day was "Sweet Belle Mahone", the chorus of which ran:

Sweet Belle Mahone, Sweet Belle Mahone,
Wait for me at Heaven's Gate,
Sweet Belle Mahone.

A large, fleshy young woman used to bring clean laundry to the building, and one day I overheard some of the boys singing:

"Sweet Martha Horn, Sweet Martha Horn,
Wait for me at the college gate,
Sweet Martha Horn."

The boys varied studies with the required military drill, and baseball, but there were no intercollegiate games then.

One quite interesting thing occurred while we were still at the old building. The board of trustees had met in the library, which was just across the hall from our rooms, and was discussing a momentous question. Miss Ella Dunlap had applied for admission to the university as a test case. The voices were loud and my mother, basting some work, heard some of the remarks. "I say," said one, very decidedly, "if a girl wants to build a wagon, let her build a wagon". He was applauded and hissed, and others expressed opposite views until finally the question came to vote. So evenly divided was the board that Dr. Gregory was obliged to cast the deciding ballot. As he was not at that time thoroughly in favor of co-education I know it must have been a trial to vote, as he did, against his inclination, because his prophetic sense told him he must do it in order to help a real advance movement.

When we left the university building we finally settled on University ave., and in the fall of 1870 I was one of the first thirteen girls to enter the university classes. I remember hearing Dr. Gregory state his change of view on the subject of co-education. It was on the occasion of the visit of President White of Cornell to Illinois to see how the co-educational system worked. Before

introducing him, Dr. Gregory said he wished to acknowledge that he had been disappointed in co-education. He had not favored it at first because he feared that the standard of scholarship would be lowered, that girls would not be able physically to endure severe courses of study, and that morally it might not be best. "But", he said, "I find that the standard of scholarship is raised. I do not know that the health of any girl has suffered by study, and no breach of morals has come to our notice, while we observe that the influence is refining and beneficial".

Well, we all cheered. Cornell opened its doors to women the next year, I believe. I remember hearing Professor Snyder say in his beaming way, "The boys used to slip out of bed for the first morning recitation and with tousled hair come in to recite in dressing-gown and slippers. Since the girls came such an object has never been seen in the classroom."

My four years at Illinois (or I. I. U. as it was then known) were full of pleasure and profit. I cannot imagine that four years in the wonderful Illinois of today could be more so, although I see many comforts that we scarce dreamed of then. Instead of the beautiful woman's building and the Y. W. C. A. we girls had a single room which served as a closet for wraps and lunch baskets, while we were in class. I had classes which kept me at the old building practically all day, from German at seven in the morning until five or later in the afternoon, when I left the library after an hour or two of reference work. We did not have even a couch in No. 11 where a girl could rest her aching back or head. Of course, later, when Miss Allen, afterwards Mrs. Gregory, came as guardian of the girls some little comforts were introduced for them. But pioneer days in any institution are interesting and helpful to those who are fortunate enough to participate in them. We had the benefit of personal acquaintance with our teachers, which in itself is a large part of one's education, and is the one great advantage of a small college over the large university. And yet we are proud of the wonderful growth of Illinois, and of the great state that has come to realize its value and so make its development possible.

Professor William Baker, who taught us English, made the course delightful with his own full mind and appreciation of his subject. I studied botany and entomology under Dr. Burrill. The students of the present know his kindly way. Professor Taft, father of our distinguished alumnus, Lorado Taft, the sculptor, had charge of geology and mineralogy. His individuality impressed itself on all in his classes. Professor Stewart taught chemistry, and inspired his students with a love for the sciences. And Professor Snyder—how many memories were evoked by the article in the last *Quarterly!* German was a favorite study, made even more so by the sympathetic teaching of the tall soldier who beamed at us through his glasses and so readily uttered, "full correct" when a good translation was made. He was always so prompt at the early recitation that I particularly remember one exception. For some reason which was never explained, he was not in the class room one morning when his prompt students entered. We waited several minutes, and each newcomer stared in amazement on missing the professor. Finally one or two of the

boys went out and soon returned, saying, "No class this morning". At this, the majority of the class went out, but all of the girls and one or two of the boys remained. They felt, somehow, that if Professor Snyder were unable to come he would send word. It was comparatively an empty room that met Professor Snyder's gaze when he entered with his firm tread, less than two minutes afterwards. He stood in the middle of the room, his face nearly as red as his hair as he thundered, "Vare de glass?" One of the boys explained. He glared for an instant, then turned swiftly and left the room. In about two minutes more the class was reassembled, and the professor said a few sharp words to the effect that as long as he was alive and able to walk, his class would always recite. Then he resumed his usual manner and the recitation went on. That was the only time I ever saw him lose his habitual courtesy and beaming good-nature.

I was in Dr. Gregory's class in history during my freshman year. Any one who studied history with Dr. Gregory gained a clearer idea of chronology than before, and a love for the story of the world. Dr. Gregory was the lecturer in all my senior studies. His lectures were given slowly as he paced back and forth in the class-room, thinking them out, and it was not difficult to take notes. At the beginning of the hour he required some student to read his notes of the day before. He asked me to copy for him my notes in a book which he gave me, as he said he was going to publish a book on political economy and had no notes of his own. Constitutional history was an interesting course. He used a text-book in logic to guide his own lectures, and taught us how to take the point out of a paragraph, as he expressed it. In his classes we got much more than a knowledge of the subject covered. So did those students who were privileged to attend morning chapel and the Sunday afternoon talks. Although a small man, and not distinguished in appearance, Dr. Gregory always impressed one with his scholarly air, and a native dignity which was rarely disturbed.

I remember one time, though, when dignity fled long enough for him to help kill a mouse that had been gnawing the lunch-baskets in the girls' room. I reported to Dr. Gregory one day that the mice were going to eat up the building, and that they had started in on the lunches. He immediately followed me into the room, just as the mouse ran across the floor.

"Catch him, catch him," called the dignified Regent, as he ran around trying to catch the intruder behind some of the piles of books, while the few girls in the room screamed and jumped on the chairs. We were successful in our hunt, and with an air of triumph, Dr. Gregory retired to his office and affairs of presumably greater importance.

I do not recollect hearing Dr. Gregory's decisions in student affairs questioned or criticised by the students. At one time an effort was made by one of the men's literary societies to get Althenai to unite with it. The girls were invited, very courteously and cordially, to do so, but Dr. Gregory quite promptly vetoed the idea. He thought it would not be best for the girls to go to the university at night to regular meetings. However, he did not object

to two or three union meetings a year, and they were held in the chapel. The programs were really good and entertaining, and were very popular.

But four years came to an end, as all busy, delightful periods of time are sure to do. Our graduation day arrived, and we bade good-bye to the young, aspiring university, now grown so great, a fair competitor with the best in the land.

AND SOME MUST WORK

THOMAS ARKLE CLARK, '90

An investigation made last spring into the character and extent of work done by the undergraduate men of the University showed that something more than thirty-five per cent of those registered earned a part or all of their expenses, and that the total amount earned during the college year and excluding the summer months approximated \$200,000. More than ninety-five per cent of the men in attendance during the second semester replied to the questionnaire sent out, so that the figures can be considered pretty complete.

Fifty years ago when the man with an empty pocketbook and a desire for learning set out for college, he carried with him a bag of potatoes or a sack of corn meal on which to subsist frugally while he toiled at the books. Things have changed entirely today. The student who lives the life of a hermit and cooks his own meals is rare, though many work their brains in order that their stomachs may be more easily and more satisfactorily filled. A few years ago two or three farmers' sons, hard up but ambitious, borrowed one or two of the family cows, drove them to the college campus, found a suitable lodging place for themselves and the cows, and lived comfortably and independently during their college course by peddling milk morning and evening.

Last year a young fellow in the sophomore class found himself without money and without a job. He saw an advertisement in the college paper for a cook at one of the short order restaurants near the campus. He had helped his mother at home, he had had a little experience in a summer camp for boys, he had some nerve, so he applied for the place and got it. The best part of the story is that he gave satisfaction, earned his board, and made a respectable salary besides.

The general opinion is that the fraternity man in college is a pampered child who loafes most of the time, spends money lavishly, and shuns all opportunities to do manual labor, or to earn an honest living. The number of fraternity men in the University is something less than twenty-five per cent of the total number enrolled. The investigation showed that of those men earning all, or a part of their living, thirteen per cent of the freshmen belonged to fraternities; thirty per cent of the sophomores; thirty-one per cent of the juniors; and thirty-seven per cent of the seniors. The special students who belong to fraternities are evidently men of leisure or of means, for only one out of seventeen attempted to earn his living. This one did a pretty good job at it since he earned eight hundred dollars during the college year. From the figures given I infer that either the man who joins a fraternity learns to work, or is eliminated from the institution.