

HOOSIER WOMEN AT WORK

STUDIES IN INDIANA WOMEN'S HISTORY

Session 3

April 2017

Making the Invisible Visible: IU Women at Work in Science and Public Health

Grace Shymanski (Bicentennial Intern, Archive Researcher, Bloomington, IN)

In the late 19th century, Indiana University began a Department of Physical Training that provided access for collegiate women to public health careers, despite stigmas surrounding female exercise and women's athletics. This paper discusses the emergence of women's physical health as an academic field of study, the pioneering women of Indiana University who led the fight to expand and create opportunities for women on campus, and illustrates the divergence of men and women's access to athletics and its significance in their lives as a form of public health. By exploring the experience of faculty and students, I aim to investigate the transformative nature of the female athlete and the overall field of women's athletics.

Claire Repsholdt (Director of Student Staff, College of Arts + Sciences Executive Deans Office, Indiana University)

My presentation will provide a closer inspection of women's labor in STEM fields, particularly female scientists whose discoveries were associated with more prominent male scientists at Indiana University. The goal will be to make visible the invisible labor women dedicated to science before it was widely advertised as a career field open to women. I investigate the scientific careers of "invisible" women in the labs of Indiana University — for example, Ruth Dippell, assistant to renowned geneticist Tracy Sonneborn, or Jessie Knight Jordan, the wife of distinguished ichthyologist David Starr Jordan — both natural scientists in their own right. By tracking some important cases at the beginning of the 20th century, I will demonstrate the way women have always been invigorating contributions to science.

Kelly Kish (Director, Office of the Bicentennial, Indiana University)

Mary Bess Owen Cameron, educator and activist, challenged the 1940s notion that sociologists should not be social reformers. Little has been written about her, and in particular her personal struggle for academic freedom at Indiana University in the 1940s, a period that proved precarious for academics interested in social issues, race and labor relations. Completely trained at IU, from BA to PhD, she became a faculty member in 1942. Prompted by a student complaint, a Trustee wrote to the university president: "If she ever told the class that colored people are just as good or better than white people, then she ought to be fired." This paper will describe her work helping to create the IU Chapter of the NAACP and the IU Teachers Union as well as her conscientious activism toward peace and equality through adult and workplace education. Her career stands as an early example of the translational service conducted by faculty members at state universities.