

History of Bacteriology at DePauw University

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In the annual catalogue of DePauw University for 1918-1919 is to be found the following statement: "A special effort has been made during the past year to equip an up-to-date bacteriological laboratory." So far as can be determined, the course which was offered in 1918 was the first ever to be offered in the subject as such at DePauw. It was taught by Dr. Bert E. Quick, now Professor of Biology at Westminster College, who held a temporary appointment in the absence of Dr. Walter N. Hess, who was serving in the armed forces.

The writer became a member of the DePauw faculty in 1919 and inherited the course and the then new equipment which consisted of a small, upright-type autoclave, hot-air oven, electric incubator, Arnold sterilizer, and glassware sufficient for a small number of students. One of the laboratories on the third floor of the old Middle College building had been adapted for the subject by installing a laboratory table with water and gas service and appropriate drawer and locker space for the students.

The course as first taught was designed as a "general introduction with emphasis on the basic principles rather than upon any special phase of the subject" and as such it has continued to the present time. At first the course consisted of two class and two laboratory periods for a credit of four hours, but in 1920 it was changed to a five-hour course by the addition of a third class period. The writer has taught the course continuously since 1919 with the exception of two years while on leave from the university. In 1932-33 it was taught by Dr. Winona H. Welch, of the DePauw faculty, and in 1939-40 by Dr. Ray F. Dawson, now at Princeton University.

For a number of years there was a demand by students for a briefer course in the nature of a survey of the subject. In 1933 such a course was introduced and so arranged that the student might elect it as a two-hour lecture course, or for three hours of credit by including one laboratory period. In 1937 the laboratory was listed as a separate course, thus enabling students to take the laboratory after having had the lecture work if they wished to do so. At present, therefore, DePauw offers the regular five-hour course in which an attempt is made to be as thorough as the allotted time will permit. In addition to this and the briefer survey course, the student may elect work for three or more hours of credit and carry on problem work along some phase of the subject in which he has developed a special interest.

The number of students electing the five-hour course usually varies from ten to twenty, while the shorter one ordinarily attracts between thirty and fifty. Because DePauw students do not major in the subject, and because of the lack of opportunity to specialize, bacteriologists, as

such, have not been graduated from DePauw. However, some have gone into the field professionally as research workers or teachers. For example, Dr. O. K. Stark, Professor of Bacteriology at Miami University, and Dr. William D. Gray, in charge of the laboratories at Seagrams in Louisville, had their undergraduate work in bacteriology at DePauw.

In the construction of the new Harrison Hall of Science, completed in 1941, more adequate laboratory facilities were provided for bacteriology at DePauw in the way of increased space, an incubator room, modern sterilizing equipment, and other apparatus.