



Divided Paths, Common Ground: The Story of Mary Matthews and Lella Gaddis, Pioneering Purdue Women Who Introduced Science into the Home (Founders Series)

Angie Klink

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In the early 1900s, Mary Matthews and Lella Gaddis forged trails for women at Purdue University and throughout Indiana. Mary was the first dean of the School of Home Economics. Lella was Indiana's first state leader of Home Demonstration. In 1914, Mary hired Lella to organize Purdue's new Home Economics Extension Service. According to those who knew them, Lella was a "sparkler" who traveled the state instructing rural women about nutrition, hygiene, safe water, childcare, and more. "Reserved" Mary established Purdue's School of Home Economics, created Indiana's first nursery school, and authored a popular textbook. Both women used their natural talents and connections to achieve their goals in spite of a male-dominated society. As a land grant institution, Purdue University has always been very connected to the American countryside. Based on extensive oral history and archival research, this book sheds new light on the important role female staff and faculty played in improving the quality of life for rural women during the first half of the twentieth century. It is also a fascinating story, engagingly told, of two very different personalities united in a common goal.

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