

**NORA  
AMARYLLIS  
TALBOT  
1878-1970**



**LELA  
O'TOOLE  
1909-1995**



**WOMEN  
OF OSU  
HOME  
ECONOMICS**

The history of home economics at Oklahoma A&M College (OAMC) and Oklahoma State University (OSU) in Stillwater is one of relevancy to the needs of home and family, and needs of the larger society in a rapidly changing world. Created in 1915, the school of home economics' success is attributed to the outstanding leadership by Deans Nora Talbot who served until 1951 and Lela O'Toole who continued as dean until 1975.

**Nora Amaryllis Talbot** was born in August 1878 in Stella, Nebraska and moved to Stillwater as a young child. Talbot graduated from Central State Normal School in Edmond with a music degree in 1907 where she played cello in the school orchestra. Upon graduation, she taught music in Stillwater and later in Parsons, Kansas before returning to OAMC in 1909 to finish her degree in home economics.

After teaching in Nowata for three years, where she established the home economics department, and Muskogee, where she taught first aid, health, food and clothing classes, Talbot returned to OAMC in 1915 as the head of the Domestic Arts Department. She was promoted to Dean eight years later. Her desire for additional education resulted in receiving a master's degree in 1921 from Columbia University and studying educational administration at Harvard University in 1929-30.

As Dean from 1923 to 1950, Nora Talbot believed that vision tempered by realism was important in developing the American way of life. She worked to ensure that the departments in home economics kept pace with physical and academic expansion of the campus. Based on requests from male students, she started a one-hour elective course in 1925 for men. The first class attracted 129 men to study personal grooming, nutrition, food preparation and host duties. The School of Hotel and Restaurant Management was added in 1938, at the men's request.

The life of Nora Amaryllis Talbot tells the story of a pioneer girl, a zealous student, and a teacher who spent years of faithful service in the field of education in music and home economics. Nora Talbot was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1956. She died in January 1970 at age 91.

**Lela O'Toole** was born in September 1909 near Thomas where she was an All-American basketball player. She attended Southwestern State College in Weatherford and Oklahoma Baptist University but earned a bachelor's degree from OAMC in secondary education, home economics and Spanish in 1935 and another in home economics education in 1939. O'Toole earned her master's degree in home economics education in 1941 and her Ph.D. from Ohio State University with major fields of study in higher education administration, teacher education, home economics, secondary education and philosophy.

She was a pioneer in Oklahoma higher education. She started as an elementary school teacher (1932-34) and home economics teacher (1935-40) before serving as state supervisor of home economics education for the State Board of Vocational Education (1941-47). She started as a professor of home economics at OSU in 1949, before becoming dean after Talbot's retirement in 1951, serving for the next 25 years.

O'Toole was actively engaged in international education activities, traveling to Turkey, Thailand, and Ireland to study educational systems, family life, education of women, and development of home economics. She established three home economics colleges in Pakistan. O'Toole was inducted into the OSU Alumni Hall of Fame in 1971, Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1975 and received the prestigious Henry G. Bennett Award in 1979. She was inducted into the Career Tech Hall of Fame in 1990 and the Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame in 1994 before her death in August 1995 at age 85.