

# First dean of IU Graduate School also had interest in fish

By ROSE WOERTZ

Special to the H-T

Indiana University students who are newly assigned to Eigenmann Hall on Tenth Street may misspell that name on their enrollment forms. They may also pass the Eigenmann dedication plaque in the lobby of their hall and wonder about the name.

**HAD EIGENMANN HALL** residents been at IU in the late 1800's and early 1900's, they probably would have passed Carl Eigenmann on the then smaller campus, sat in one of his classes or consulted with him about graduate courses.

Born in Flehingen, Germany, in 1863, he came to America at age 17 and settled in Rockport, Ind. Two years later he came to Bloomington, thinking he wanted to study Latin and Greek at IU. But he met the university's president, David Starr Jordan, himself a scientist, and changed his major to zoology.

By 1889, Eigenmann had received three degrees from IU. After a stint of roaming over western United States and Canada to gather fish for the British Museum, he took up teaching duties at IU. By 1908, the IU Graduate School

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was formally organized, and Eigenmann was appointed its first dean. At the same time he served as curator of fish at the Carnegie Museum at Pittsburgh.

**A MULTI-FACETED MAN**, Eigenmann didn't neglect his IU duties while he was serving other institutions. He founded the university's freshwater biological station in northern Indiana in 1895 and directed it until a few years before his death.

Eigenmann's active curiosity led him to study what zoologists would call "degenerative evolution in blind vertebrates." Translated into layman's language, it meant that he was studying the specialized subject of blind fish. Spawned

underground in the streams that run through caves, they are called "Northern Blind Cave Fish" and are blind because they don't need eyesight in the dark caves.

In his study of the fish Eigenmann was trying to find out where they fit into the evolution process and for how many generations they had been blind. To find the answers to those questions he went into the cold, damp, dark cave at nearby Spring Mill State Park and others as far away as Kentucky, Texas and Cuba.

**EIGENMANN HAD A** theory about how blind fish developed, and what he learned about them proved valuable to the scientific field. But other scientists were working on the same subject. When Eigenmann felt that enough research had been done, he switched his attention to finding, identifying and recording fish so far not included in textbooks and scientific archives.

Again his curiosity led him far afield from Bloomington and IU. On "field trips" to then British Guiana, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and Chile, he not only made notes about their native fish, but saw that hundreds of people in those countries were dying from yellow fever from the bites of mosquitoes. As a "sideline" of his

research Dr. Eigenmann advised the governments of those countries to stock their ponds and streams with a particular kind of fish that would eat the mosquito larvae before they had a chance to carry yellow fever.

**HIS COLLEAGUES** in the field of science may have regarded him only as a scientist. There were, however, other sides to his nature. In 1887, he married Rosa Smith and fathered several children by her.

According to Edith Huntington Anderson of Bloomington, who knew him when he was a high school student, he had a lively sense of humor and interest in his family. A friend of Eigenmann's daughter, Adele, Mrs. Anderson recalls learning to dance at his home on the southwest corner of Atwater and Fess avenues.

Good-natured as he was, Eigenmann was considered an absent-minded professor in the days before that expression became commonplace. His occasional absent-minded lapses may have been due to his shifting mental gears from the pure, intense world of academic research to the practical details of everyday life.