

Third Edition

HISTORY OF AMERICAN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT

PAULA D. WELCH



A contrast in style: basketball in the 1970s and 2000s.

**HISTORY OF AMERICAN
PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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By

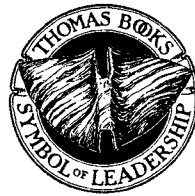
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To Mike and Steve Lineberger
Dan Rosenthal

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Although history does not change, opportunities to read previously unavailable primary sources provides a more complete and objective view of the past. Since the second edition, I have learned more about intercollegiate sport and its influence on the academy, the emergence of sport management as an academic discipline, the Olympic movement, Title IX, and governance of national and international sport organizations.

Others who have assisted in this project include my colleagues from the College of Health and Human Performance, Dr. Ruth Alexander and Dr. Sue Whiddon. They readily offered their time and expertise. Dr. Julie Dodd, College of Journalism and Communication and Colonial Jeanne Picariello, US Army (retired) sent numerous journal articles and recommended pertinent data. Kane Alexander's meticulous review of the manuscript was especially beneficial. Finally, I am thankful for my friends, family, and colleagues who expressed their interest and encouragement in this project.

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**HISTORY OF AMERICAN
PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT**

Chapter 1

A PRELUDE TO AMERICAN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT

During the latter years of the nineteenth century physical education was known as gymnastics, physical training, and physical culture. Early physical activity experiences in school settings were limited in scope and not accessible to a large portion of the populace. In contrast, twenty-first century physical educators apply the dynamics of human movement to games, sport, and dance. Students in kindergarten through grades 12 and those in post-secondary institutions benefit from varied activities.

Athletic programs in the United States involve varsity competition between schools, with most contests occurring at the secondary and college or university levels. Athletic programs were the invention of male college students in the 1850s and became securely ingrained in institutions of higher learning. As the turn of the century approached, female students were briefly introduced to athletics, but it was not until three quarters of the twentieth century had passed that women's athletics were a visible entity in society.

Physical activity as characterized in games, sports, and dance has been an integral part of American culture since its beginnings. The nation's exercise heritage has assumed diverse forms with origins from native Americans and immigrants who came to the New World. Early exercise as a part of human expression was influenced by the will to survive in a hostile environment which once tamed, gave way to less utilitarian and more pleasure-seeking forms of amusement. As with any social institution in a highly complex society, games, sports, and dance have been directly influenced by other institutions such as religion, education, government, and industry. To more fully comprehend the scope of contemporary programs and practices, one must be familiar with their origins and development. Knowledge of the history of physical education and sport can enhance one's understanding of current trends in society and provide a proper perspective as a guide for present and future program direction. An overview of sport and physical activity in the United States completes the remainder of Chapter 1 with subsequent chapters containing specific topical material.

CHANGES IN SPORTING INTERESTS AND STYLES OF PLAY

The Indians or native Americans who first settled in what is presently the United States viewed physical activity as an inherent part of their life-style. Their games had deep religious overtones which were neither understood nor fully appreciated by early Caucasian observers. The game of lacrosse has remained one lasting contribution to the nation's sports scene provided by native Americans. The colonists who later settled in America ushered in the colonial era beginning in 1607. In spite of severe hardships they found time for their own unique forms of expression through games and dances of European ancestry. Hunting skills were at first used out of necessity and later became a source of enjoyment. Contests such as hammering a nail by firing a rifle provided both entertainment and practice of hunting skills for frontier pioneers. As hunting became less pertinent for both urban and western dwellers other activities were substituted. The interaction between people of geographic settings produced differing styles of play and rules often varied from region to region. In general, the sports that became the rage in the east spread west and south.

AMERICANS BECOME ENAMORED WITH SPORT

Horseracing was the most organized sport before the Civil War, but its growth did not proceed without criticism. It appealed to all classes of people and to both men and women. Other sports which attracted a large segment of the citizenry after the war between the states included boxing and baseball. Some sports became professional enterprises. Both amateur and professional sports consumed the interest of Americans and they became enamored with them as evidenced by early newspaper accounts of their spectatorship and participation. *The National Police Gazette*, first published in 1845, recounted crimes and devoted space to numerous sports events. A writer for the *Gazette* described the prevailing feeling toward sports in 1867:

The powerful impetus which Out Door Sports of every kind have received within the past few years in this country, and their rapid extension, evinces the deep interest which the American people feel in all those manly and athletic exercises which conduce so materially to physical and mental development. Athletic amusements are coeval with the world's earliest days. Leading to health, and promotive of cheerfulness, they supply to friendly intercourse a generous warmth and manly spirit they have often ennobled the social attributes of a people. They are important, viewed merely as a medium of pleasure; but to appreciate them in all their effects, is to give them a still higher position. They have formed the characteristics of nations, and they share with literature and art the classical pages of history. It is a plain axiom of experience that the just blending of labor and recreation produces the highest order of longevity.¹

The American public has spent large sums of money on sport which encompasses both amateur and professional competition. Although profes-

sional sports helped to establish America as a "sporting nation," the text does not extend the coverage of professional sports into the twentieth century. It is the intent of the author to use them only to show how they contributed to America's enthrallment with sports.

ETHNIC INFLUENCE

Some of the immigrants who arrived in America continued to cultivate their own language, religion, recreational activities, and political beliefs, while others more readily took on the mores of their new homeland. Contributions were made by these new Americans, whether or not they continued to practice their familiar customs or more readily blended into what became known as the American way of life. Those who came from Germany preserved much of their culture and introduced a system of gymnastics and physical education to the cities. The Scots continued their interest in sports and initiated the Caledonian Games. The first club was founded in 1853 and demonstrates by way of one example how early practices influenced sport development. A description of the Brooklyn club's activities in 1867 illustrates several unique features of the clubs. The Brooklyn Caledonian Club organized March 9, 1866, and had attracted a membership of 200 a year later. Its purpose was "to foster fellowship and to perpetuate in memory the old customs, legends, and glory of 'auld Scotia.'"² Club members planned to construct a library, reading room, and gymnasium. During the summer of 1867 the Brooklyn club invited other Caledonian groups from New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania to participate in their Scottish Games. The events were held at Jones' Woods which was a site for many New York City amusements. The participants in full Highland dress marched to the accompaniment of pipers. A Scottish reel preceded the program which was also interspersed with dancing. The twenty-one-event program consisted of:

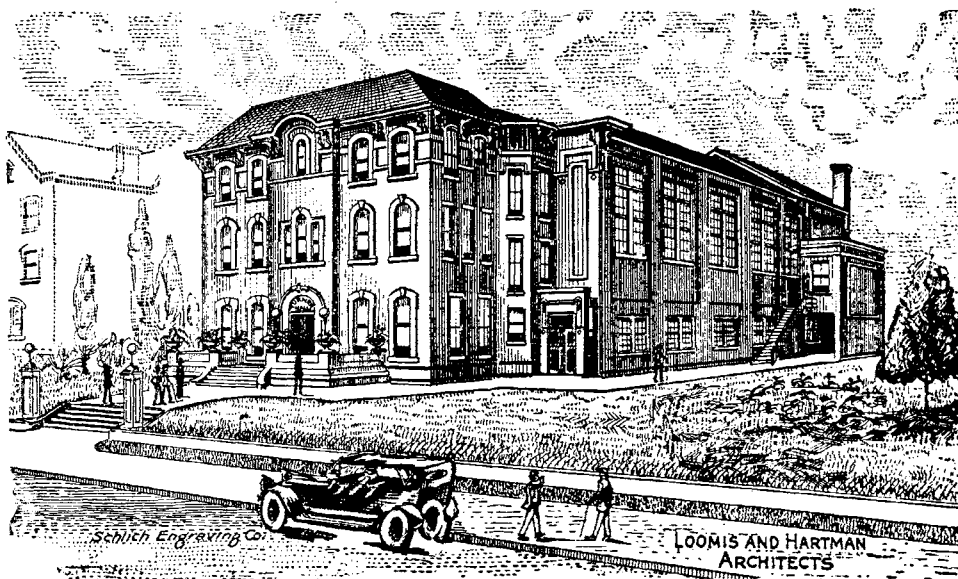
1. Putting the heavy stone (24 pounds)
2. Putting the light stone (18 pounds)
3. The standing jump
4. Throwing the heavy hammer (21 pounds)
5. Throwing the light hammer (16 pounds)
6. The running jump
7. The Highland fling
8. The short race
9. The running high leap
10. The boys' race
11. The three-legged race
- Intermission
- Scottish reel
12. Vaulting with pole

13. The long race
14. Tossing the caber
15. The broadsword dance
16. The sack race
17. The standing high leap
18. The egg race
19. The hurdle race
20. Hop, step, and jump
21. Wheelbarrow race

Prizes were awarded for first through third place finishes in the various events. These included medals, a picture of Mary Queen of Scots, Scotch bonnet, tartan hose, and silver shoe buckles. A silver medal valued at \$12.00 was awarded to the neatest dressed participant. Because of rain the participants adjourned to the dancing pavilion where they enjoyed more Scottish dances. The uncontested athletic events were postponed until September.³ The Caledonian Games promoted interest in track and field in the United States.

Dance forms in America have undergone marked changes due to the in-

OUR NEW HOME



310 East Broadway - - Louisville, Kentucky

Figure 1.1. In 1850, the Louisville Kentucky Turnverein was organized. The Louisville Turners opened a new building on their 67th anniversary. Courtesy of Forrest F. Steinlage, Louisville, Kentucky.