

# Women in Sport in the United States 1800-1860

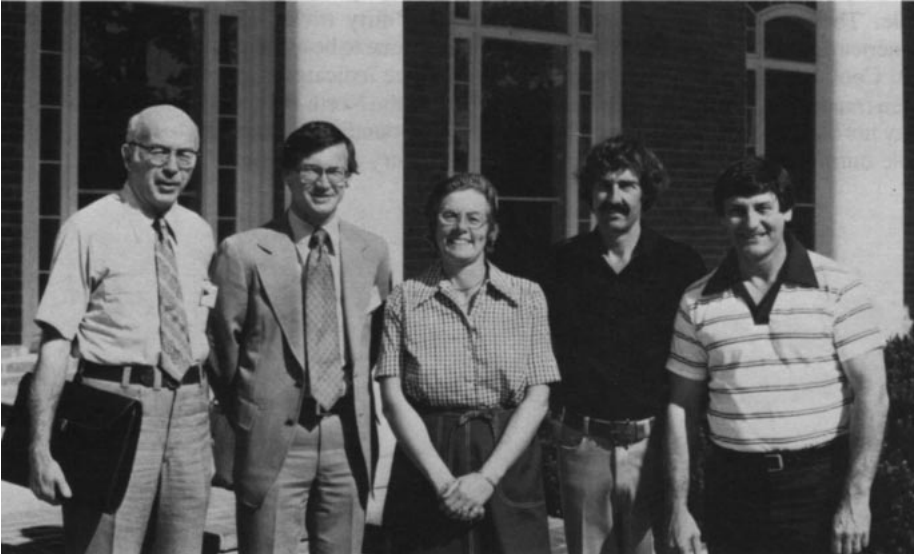
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The Victorian ideal manifested itself during the period, though such an ideal was obviously difficult to attain, and was basically an emerging ideal for the upper classes. As in most other societies, the physical activities of the poor and lower middle classes rarely appear in the literature. Sports and games for women held a minor position in society, as may be evidenced by the lack of mention of physical education for women in the schools and colleges. Mount Holyoke was an exception in this regard, and pointed to the later adoption of sport and physical education as a necessary part of an all-round education. But this was to be in the future.

However, there is evidence of women doing sword balancing, participating as equestrian circus performers, ballooning and even dueling. Calisthenics, shuttlecock, the use of wands, dancing, social clubs, teas, card parties, horseback riding, acting as spectators at race courses, gambling on horses and other things, observing fox hunts and bathing were in evidence. However, it is obvious that the most generally acceptable recreation, sports and physical activities were dancing, social clubs, teas, card parties, horseback riding and participating as spectators at horse races. Women had not, indeed, broken away from the restrictions and behavior patterns that society had forced upon them.



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