

Lillian D. Wald: A Pioneer Woman For Recreation Reform of the City Frontier

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Lillian D. Wald (1867-1940), nurse and distinguished social worker, was one of the pioneers of the social settlement movement. The purpose of the social settlement movement was to provide basic human services to the poor, and among the human needs deemed as basic by settlement workers was recreation. The settlement idea contended that recreation is one of the fundamental needs of all human beings, and social settlements were instrumental in securing parks, playgrounds, recreation centers, and organizing athletic clubs.

Lillian D. Wald was a figure of major importance during her life and a lasting influence on our subsequent social history. Among other things, she founded both the Visiting Nurse Service and the Henry Street settlement House on Manhattan's Lower East Side, and she also developed the first public school nursing program. With regard to recreation, Lillian D. Wald was instrumental in organizing the Outdoor Recreation League which spearheaded recreation reform in New York City.

Her social work resulted in numerous reforms in New York City. The *New York Times* obituary of September 2, 1940 acknowledged her social concerns, "She fought the evils of the sweatshop, of underpaid and overworked labor, of fire hazards in houses and factories, of bad housing, of inadequate play spaces.

The purpose of my paper is to present the social work conducted by Lillian D. Wald and the influence she had on establishing social reform: however, the particular focus of my presentation deals with the reform efforts of Lillian D. Wald in the area of recreation reform. She set a precedent for the establishment of public parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers, and my paper is concerned with her motives for recreation reform.