

# Lou Henry Hoover: Champion for Girls' and Women's Recreational Sport

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In her time, Lou Henry Hoover was a women's rights advocate of the first order. She was a champion of recreational sports through her vision of an alternative model of athletics based on the democratic ideal of "A sport for every girl and every girl in a sport." While the motto may not have originated with Hoover, the concept of outdoor life and sport was a part of her educational experience and consciousness. In the 20's and 30's, she was a leader in the crusade to revamp the policies affecting girls and women's athletics. She envisioned a separate sphere for girls and women in sport with women at the helm. This paper investigates Lou Henry Hoover's role in forming the Women's Division (WD) of the National Amateur Athletic Federation, her influence in volunteer organizations on behalf of girls' and women's recreational sports, and examines her leadership style in achieving her mission. What emerges is a study of volunteerism at its best. Hoover's work is an excellent example of using the volunteer-system to deal with complex and difficult social issues.

Contrary to Physical Education literature, Lou Henry Hoover was a prime mover, organizer, and administrator during the formation of the Women's Division. She had a unique coalition of physical education leaders, her own circle of friends, and political allies, and economic clout as a public figure that enabled her to so effectively disseminate information and influence public policies in the controlled development of women's athletic programs with special reference to Play Days, universal participation and socialization goals. Hoover was a transitional woman who promoted certain traditional values while advocating new roles and opportunities for women and girls. Her stand on the Play Day, universal participation and socialization goals was a blend of traditional concepts for women, accentuated with the joy of vigorous competitive sport "of the right kind."

The broader perspective of Hoover's role of influences highlights patterns of conduct different from other women functioning in leadership roles acquired, in part, because of their husbands' political offices. The data presents new views of the power role of a woman in her separate sphere. It may lead to new conclusions about the distinct culture of women in changing public policy without challenging the integrity of the established male model. Hoover's work lends insight to the traditional approaches of volunteer organizations in all forms of reform within the American system.