

# Helen Wills— The Aloof and Alluring Champion

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Helen Wills, one of America's greatest women tennis champions, during her career was referred to as "Miss Poker Pace" and "Queen Helen." The "Miss Poker Face" was due to her incredible concentration on the court coupled with an expressionless demeanor. This behavior caused many tennis experts to rate her the most controlled champion the game has ever seen. "Queen Helen" was a fitting tribute to her accomplishments as she competed for 18 years and for most of those years dominated the game.

She was not only a talented athlete but a most attractive woman. Described as elegant and lovely her beauty was enhanced by a handsome carriage. Playing usually with a white eye shade her cold expression and handsome figure gave an aura of aloofness and mystery.

Helen Wills won the singles championship at Wimbledon 8 times, at Forest Hills 7 times and at Paris 4 times. An Olympian, who won the gold in both the singles and doubles in 1924, she, also, was on the Wightman Cup team 8 times, serving as its captain in 1930 and 1932.

Similar to Suzanne Lenglen who claimed illness and defaulted a match at Forest Hills when she was losing, Helen Wills, also, in 1933, at Forest Hills, left the court stating she could not continue when she was behind in a final set. Both matches are still remembered as controversial due to the suspicion both champions feigned illness to avoid outright defeat.

Helen Wills married twice, first to Frederick Moody and then to Aiden Roark. When she retired from tennis in 1938, she never again participated in any events connected with the game, which caused Ted Tinling, the tennis expert, to label her “the Greta Garbo of tennis.” She was an accomplished artist whose works were exhibited in many galleries. She wrote several books, the most notable being her autobiography in 1937. She had had experience in writing as she wrote many tennis articles for various magazines during the years she played in tournaments.

At the present time Helen Wills is 86 years of age and lives quietly and privately in California. Her record of 8 singles championships at Wimbledon which she had held since 1938 was broken this summer when Martina Navratilova won her 9th Wimbledon singles title. This aloof and alluring champion who played from 1921-1938 reigned supreme for most of those years. It certainly was fitting that in 1959 the International Tennis Hall of Fame inducted two personalities who will forever be remembered as two of the greatest champions—William Tatem Tilden and Mrs. Helen Wills Moody Roark.