

The Forgotten Careers of Three Women Professional Baseball Players of the Early 1900s: A Socio-Cultural History

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This paper examined the careers of three women professional baseball players at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The women are: Lizzie Arlington, a pitcher in 1898; Alta Weiss, a pitcher from 1907 to 1922; and Lizzie Murphy, a first baseman from 1918 to 1935. The socio-cultural and economic factors that provided the opportunities for these women to participate in a traditional male sport are analyzed. Reasons are given as to why their participation failed to change the opportunity structure of baseball.

Except for their love of baseball and male sponsorship, the three women have little in common. Economically, they represent different social classes. Geographically, they hail from different states: Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Massachusetts. And although all would be seen as feminists today, none would have thought of themselves as feminists or suffragettes. Although each is personally unique in terms of how she became involved in professional baseball, the major premise of this paper is that two major factors in history coincided to permit women's participation. One, socio-cultural and economic factors allowed women to step outside their traditional domestic role and two, the patriarchy supported women's participation in baseball because it benefitted the owners and promoters economically.