

Nancy Wardwell
Ohio State University

Philanthropy, Physical Education, and Historically Black Colleges Some Preliminary Observations

Philanthropists, by definition, seek to promote human welfare, to increase the well-being of mankind. Students of early physical education in America are aware of the role of philanthropists in establishing programs and the building of gymnasias in the North, but little has been known about the influence of philanthropy in post-Civil War nineteenth century South. These northern philanthropists built schools of all descriptions, including normal schools, and sent thousands of teachers from northern colleges to teach in the war ravaged South. Long before the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865, the American Missionary Association (AMA) came into being and

the two organizations shared many of the same workers. Several missionary societies had merged in 1846 to form the AMA in order to raise consciences and funds in the North against slavery.

When longtime Hampton University faculty member Dr. Kathryn Kisabeth sought assistance in developing a long overdue history of Physical Education and Sport at Hampton we did not anticipate the wealth of material and issues we would find. Visits to Hampton's well organized and extensive archives have yielded much beyond the originally documentation of the development and expansion of academic and athletic programs. One of our discoveries was a clear connection between Hampton and New England through Calvinists, Unitarians, Congregationalists, and other abolitionists, and the American Missionary Association. The AMA was the source of funding for programs, facilities, and personnel at Hampton – and numerous other educational institutions founded in the South for freedmen after the U.S. Civil War. Not only did AMA members provide funding, they sent their children, the graduates of their New England colleges, south to teach and run the schools.

The founder of Hampton and its first “principal” was Samuel Chapman Armstrong, a graduate of Williams University. After the war he decided that his life work lay with providing educational opportunities for freedmen. In 1866 he had written in a report to the Freedmen's Bureau “The education of the freedmen is the great work of the day. It is their only hope, the only power that can lift them as a people . . . (and) they must do it for themselves.” In July 1867 Armstrong applied to AMA for the funds to buy land and build Hampton. He traveled extensively throughout the northeast and midwest, speaking regularly and persuasively to Protestant churches, colleges, and other groups noted for their abolitionist views and their concern for the well being of freedmen. He proved himself superbly successful at raising support and funds for the work and growth at Hampton.

Hampton's provision of physical education programs often preceded those in the North. At Hampton a program was required for women beginning in 1875. In 1884 the gift of a women's gymnasium was secured from Fredrick Marquand, a noted New York philanthropist. The first physical educator arrived at Hampton in 1892, from Boston Normal School of Gymnastics, as were the next three female physical educators. Their collective

tenure spanned more than twenty years. Their annual reports reside in the archives at Hampton, and their personal alumna reports are in the Wellesley Archives. These will be central to this paper.

In the years following the Civil War the Freedmen's Bureau and the AMA founded 4,329 schools and colleges in the South. Of the colleges, eight are still in operation with six still closely allied with the American Missionary Association! At the archives of Atlanta (Clark) University and we found "The first physical education teacher employed was Miss Flora May Greenough (1901) a graduate of Posse Gymnasium" and that "basketball had first introduced to the girls in 1899 by Miss Mary L. Dodd, a graduate of Wellesley."



NASSH President Allen Guttman