

SPORT, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, AND RECREATION

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Of Interest to Every Thinking Man and Woman of Today: Play and Recreational Programs for Youth, 1895-1940 – Three Cases of Studies

In the late 1800s, rapid urbanization, immigration, and concerns that children and youth were being attracted to city vices prompted reformers across the United States to take actions to combat what were seen as “social ills.” This period also witnessed developments in psychological and social sciences that resulted in different ways of thinking about children and their needs. Of particular importance were those who sought to better understand developmental processes and apply such knowledge in the education of children. These matters also attracted the attention of social reformers who were anxious to teach habits and morals, and at the same time to transmit to the younger generation their version of American values.

The child study movement had emerged in the 1880s. The Pedagogical Seminary was founded by G. Stanley Hall in 1892 to foster research into child development and growth. These tendencies are illustrated in Dominick Cavallo’s book Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds an Urban Reform, 1880-1920, in which he discusses various developments in the biological, psychological, and social sciences, as well as the work of social reformers and the emergence of the Playground Movement. The title of Cavallos’s book illustrates well one of the important ways by which children were to be socialized into American culture, which is through play. The word “muscles” in Cavallo’s title is also appropriate because many individuals had come to believe that there was a fundamental relationship between physical and mental as well as psychological development. The period also witnessed a substantial growth in efforts to improve the physical health of children. All of these things, and more, became major parts of the play and playground movement and efforts to train professionals to work in their field. As early as 1902, for example the Baltimore training school of the Children’s Playground

Association had been organized to meet the needs for play leaders on summer playgrounds. By 1918 it included work in kindergarten games, story dramatizations, singing games, and children's gardens as well as athletics. Following an only moderately successful attempt to conduct a six-week summer Montessori school, the dean of University of California Summer Sessions entered negotiations with Clark Hetherington and his wife, Daisy, who organized at Berkeley in 1913 a far more successful Demonstration Play School. The offerings were similar to those of the Baltimore Training School, ranging from games and dancing to gardening to carpentry and much more. This operated until 1932. By 1916, Frank Kleeberger (Chairman of the University's department of Physical Education) also was conducting a similar-but by no means identical program. These served to train professionals and also provided children with pleasant educational experiences. Their scope and intensity however, did not in any way reach that Columbia Park Boys' Club.

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What's Past is Prologue: The Transformation of Geza Feldman and the Role of Physical Activity in the Life of George Field

Under cloudy skies, the Cunard liner Andania docked at Halifax's Pier 2 on Easter Sunday, April 12, 1925, one of five transatlantic liners to arrive in the Nova Scotia capital that day. Before the Andania set sail from Cherbourg, France, the ship's log recorded the boarding of a tall man, graying, of obviously Central European roots among its 322 third-class passengers. He was listed as Geza Feldman, 33 years old, a Jew from Hungary. When he disembarked in his new world, the graying 33-year-old became George Field – my grandfather. The symbolism could not have been more perfect. For a Central European Jew, desperate to leave the horrors of trench warfare and anti-Semitism behind, determined to start a new life, one removed in both degree and kind from the old, Halifax on this cool, Easter Sunday morning was an ideal starting point.

This study explores the immigration experience of my grandfather, a Hungarian Jew born in a small agricultural village that now lies within the borders of Ukraine. I examine my