1.2.3. Play

– pass, catch, pass again, keep it in the air

The early history of women’s lacrosse

Jane Claydon
Map to show St Andrews and some major cities in the UK
Manuscripts and Special Collections,
The University of Nottingham, MS 57
Miss Lumsden taken in the early 1880s

Miss Dove in 1896
LACROSSE.

Attraction Extraordinary.

The Celebrated European Team of Caughnawaga Indians will play the Toronto Lacrosse Team, including the players just returned from Europe, on the Jarvis-Street Grounds, tomorrow, Saturday, 1st Sept., at three P.M.

The Indian team comprises White Eagle, Strong Arm, Lefebre, Dominique, and other celebrated players. Admission as usual.
Monday.—We went in the afternoon to a party at Mrs. Redpath’s; her son, “now gone to his home above,” she said, had known one of mine at Cambridge. It is a pretty place, on a hill near this, and a good many people there; it got very damp after sunset. We none of us went to an evening party going on at Mrs. Gault’s, being too tired. Mr. C—called early and went with me to sections; John joined me, and we saw and heard Captains Ray and Greely of Arctic fame. They say he (Greely) and his living companions saved themselves from starvation by eating their dead ones—a dreadful alternative, but I don’t think they were to blame; it did’nt agree with him, for he looks horribly ill, poor man! In the afternoon we all went to see the Indian game of La Crosse played between twelve Montrealists and twelve Indians. It is pretty and exciting, something between lawn tennis and football—I could have watched it for hours! we were
New York Club v the Canadians 1884 – Ontario Lacrosse Museum
CRAWFORD HOUSE,
WHITE MOUNTAINS, N.H.,
Sept. 6, 1884.

I wrote last on Tuesday. That afternoon we went to see a great Lacrosse match between the Canghuawaya Indians and the Montreal Club. These Indians live not far from Montreal, above the Lachine Rapids, and are, of course, civilised, and many of them very wealthy. They were in ordinary costume—dark-blue jerseys, velvet breeches, hats and all dark blue, and their dark faces and legs, bare from the knee, gave them a most picturesque appearance. Their chief was called White Eagle. But the whites were a stronger team, and won the game. It is a wonderful game, beautiful and graceful. (I was so charmed with it that I introduced it at St Leonards.)
Owing to the lack of a drill mistress, Rule I, B, was set aside for the January Term, 1890, and it was decided to award the Shield on a competition in Lacrosse. Four Lacrosse Matches took place. The dates and results of these are given below.

**Thurs: March 27th**
1. N'hall East (Capt. S. Dickson) beat Queen's Terrace (Capt. C. Maunders) by goals to 1.
2. N'hall West (Capt. J. Stevenson) beat Daygirls (Capt. L. Lindsay) by 2 goals to 0.

**Sat: March 29th**
A match between N'hall...
Yullochweem.

not a served as our
requirements to either
to begin, but owing to
the absence of the Face
it was rather difficult
for the order to be carried
out. However the ball
was duly brought rapid
1,2,3. They had been
called a reserve game
before, about quarter
time the Captain pinned
the first goal & then a
reek before the referee
himself. He then
jammed. The Zealand
played
the honor of playing
for the outcome of the
game, and as such
behaving with the
ball
so that it should not
be played away every
seconds & getting the

Tullochweem.

ball away from the official. It was able to
push up & pass the ball. As regards
 whilst passing that the

occurrences made against that he carried

the was actually false.

The expected great things to expectation.
The Zealand & played well. We are pleased to

report the last did not come quite up to our

expectations. J. Elliot

report was very credited

looked so if it were a

matter of life - all the

time &

Donald
didn't praise for the

way in which the game was able

to be played to the best

playing very well.

Mr. James

played as well as usual

right to be commended

for the way in which the

followed the Knowledge

came to the duties!

James.

Grame to the

great applause from

one & all up the Exhibition

way in which he played

up in the senses of the

bonds; as James is surely

worth a mention.

Every time he was better

after playing had such a
dering time to practice right

certainly at least to have
The Shield

The first trophy for women’s lacrosse
Robert Wilkes, far left with his family in Quebec, pre 1901. © John Wilkes
John Robert Sparling Wilkes  *Lacrosse and athletics coach*

Known as Robert Wilkes he emigrated to England in 1901. His home was originally in Quebec and his trade was engraver.

Mr Wilkes set himself up as a lacrosse coach and over the years coached at a number of schools in the London area including: The Princess Helena College, St George’s School Ascot, Heathfield School and St Stephen’s, Clewer. We know this because he is mentioned in a number of school magazines.

Heathfield School recorded playing a match in 1904 against Madame Bergman Österberg’s College where Mr Wilkes also coached so that is how we know he also coached there.

Madame Bergman Österberg’s College was a prestigious institution where girls were trained as teachers of Swedish gymnastics and games. On graduating they were quickly snapped up by girls’ schools and colleges, not just in the UK but also in America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

These teachers were appointed to schools where they, in turn, introduced lacrosse, not just in the UK but in the US and as we shall see in Canada.
Cara Gascoigne, left, attended Queen Anne’s School in 1907

© Queen Anne’s School, Caversham 1907
St Leonards - draw on the ground 1907
Rosabelle Sinclair at St Leonards, holding the Shield 1909
Southern Ladies 1911
In 1912 the Ladies Lacrosse Association was founded. It was not called the English Ladies Association as Scotland was part of this group.

Lacrosse was a school based game in the UK.
THE SCOTTISH TEAM MAKE AN IMPOSING ENTRY TO THE FIELD OF PLAY.
One of the many fine saves made by the Scottish Goal-Keeper, Miss M. Reid. England v. Scotland at Richmond.
Miss D. James (Wales), Miss E. R. Clarke (England).

A Ladies' Lacrosse International at Richmond.—The rival captains.

In this match Wales was outclassed by England to the extent of fifteen goals.
LADIES’ LACROSSE AT OXFORD.—THE SOUTHERNS BEAT THE OXFORD LADIES BY 7 GOALS TO 3.

Miss P. Whitefife,
The Oxford goalkeper.

Miss Higson,
The Southern goalkeeper.
The Ladies Field dated 18th April 1914 stated in a report about the women’s lacrosse internationals:

Each year sees an enormous number of recruits, and the well known Mr Wilkes finds his clientele increase with amazing rapidity each successive season.
The Bergman Osterberg Physical Training College, Dartford Heath.
John Robert Sparling Wilkes with a group of players about 1920
Winifred O. Legg, author of

*Lacrosse for Beginners*

published in 1923.

Photograph taken at Madame Bergman Österberg’s College in 1913.

(Courtesy of the Bergman Österberg Union Archive)
Rosabelle Sinclair.
Photograph at Madame Bergman Österberg’s College in 1912.
(Courtesy of the Bergman Österberg Union Archive)
Ron is Rosa's Uncle.
Reg is Rosa's father.
Reginald Bligh Halliburton Sinclair seemed a bit of an adventurer and travelled all over the world.
ROSABELLE SINCLAIR
St. Leonard’s School - Inducted 1992
First woman inducted into National Lacrosse Hall of Fame. Introduced women’s lacrosse in U.S. at Bryn Mawr in 1926.

Sinclair is the first female inductee into the National Lacrosse Hall of Fame. She taught at Bryn Mawr from 1925-51. Shortly before her death in 1978, she had the pleasure of knowing that an athletic field at the school had been named in her honor. A graduate of St. Leonard’s School in Scotland, where women’s lacrosse originated, Miss Sinclair introduced the sport at Bryn Mawr in 1926. Although the parents at Bryn Mawr required convincing that lacrosse was safe for their daughters to play, she succeeded in starting a team that continues to play today, the oldest team in the country. By 1928, Sinclair had taught lacrosse to high school teams and clubs around Baltimore. The game soon spread to Philadelphia, New York and Boston, and in 1931, the United States Women’s Lacrosse Association was formed.
Sinclair was a stickler for perfection, using lacrosse to teach hard work, discipline, patience, steadfastness of purpose, achievement and motivation.
ROSABELLE SINCLAIR

St. Leonard’s School
1992

First woman inducted into National Lacrosse Hall of Fame. Introduced women’s lacrosse in U.S. at Bryn Mawr School (Md.) in 1926.
Extract from McGill University Year Book 1922

This is the indication that women played lacrosse at McGill in 1921

What is not known is who coached the students

Not only can we boast of being the only Physical Training School in Canada, but we also have the ladies’ championship lacrosse team of Canada, or at least of Montreal, and are ready at any time to accept a challenge in our national sport. This year the “Physical Eds.” joined the Ladies’ Hockey League, a nine-inch fence at 7 a.m. meeting time, and earned...
Lori Livingston in her article, *Ready … Draw! The Golden Age of Senior Women’s Field Lacrosse in Canada*, written in 2015, states that Bishop Strachan School in Toronto began playing the sport in the early 1920s and Havergal College began lacrosse in 1927.
Miss Christina Booth, pictured here, was the games coach at Bishop Strachan School.
Left, E.R. Clarke and right, Norah Strathairn.

These ladies were Christina Booth’s lacrosse coaches at Madame Bergman Österberg’s College in Dartford.
This extract, from Havergal College’s magazine *Ludemas* indicates that the school introduced lacrosse in 1927.
Lacrosse

An innovation in the way of sports was introduced this year at Branksome in the game Lacrosse. A number of the girls have entered into the game under the able leadership of Miss Ronaldson, and have developed much enthusiasm for this sport which has been called the national game of Canada.

It was originated by the Indians. The team consists of twelve players, the object of each side being to get the ball, by means of a crosse, between the opponent’s goal posts. Of course there are many rules which make the game more complicated.

We are watching with interest the progress of the team and hope that it will contribute materially to the school sports.

KATHERINE LEA (Clan McLean).

This page is taken from the Branksome Slogan dated 1931.

The sport was introduced to the school by Miss Emily Irene Ronaldson.
HOCKEY FIELD
AND
LACROSSE

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SEASON 1924-25.

Vol. IV. No. 10] THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1924. [PRICE SIXPENCE.

Included NET-BALL.

[Image: Hockey Field and Lacrosse, December 4, 1924. Advertisement for Slazengers hockey sticks and hockey balls. The ad promotes the "Runnymede" and "Stadium" models, noting their use in international, county, varsity, and club matches. The advertisement also highlights the company's globe design.
This article, written in 1923, refers to lacrosse being played by girls in California.

The President of the Canadian Tourist Society was involved with the introduction of the game to girls in South California.
Mrs Hooper writes in Hockey Field and Lacrosse published on 27th March 1924.
This extract, dated 27th March 1924, indicates President Hooper used a chart to explain to the girls how to play lacrosse.
British Pathe News clip of women playing lacrosse in Los Angeles in 1926 called:

No game for weaklings.

Girl amazons in Ladies' Lacrosse Championship show as much skill and speed as mere man.
Pirates Lacrosse Club
Vancouver B.C.

H.L.C.A. Hesse (Chap. Pres), Mary Carsie, Pearl Lapps, Eva McMillan, Mary Johnston, Frances Reid, Helen Little (Vice Cap), Lily Turan, Ellis McDermid, Nora Kennedy (Capt.), Irene Hambury, Dot Clark, Noel Scott, Ethel Andrews, Gertrude Gane, May Freeman, Kay Slavin (Asst. Pres), Ray Pavlick, Gary Lewis, Cory A. Hesse (Manager)

Pirates Lacrosse Club Vancouver B.C Champions 1927 - 1931
In 1927-1928, the draw for women was changed from the traditional method on the ground, to an action which took place at waist level.
Far From The White Cliffs Of Dover
1982 WORLD LACROSSE TOURNAMENT

SEPTEMBER 20th—25th. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE C.C.C. TRENT BRIDGE
Organised by the G.B. Council on behalf of the I.F.W.L.A.
CANADA BRINE 1982 WORLD TOURNAMENT SQUAD

Front Row Left to Right: Pam Glass, Trainer, Debbie Smith, Kim Davidovitch, Janis Holt, Janice Wilson, Stacey Smith, Kerri Hardhill, Co-Captain, Janice Malcom, Jennie Kyle, Team Manager.
CANADIAN WOMEN'S FIELD LACROSSE TEAM
BRINE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND — SEPT. 20-25, 1982

BACK ROW (L-R): VICKY BRIECH, PAUL GILKISON (Aster, Coach), JENNY KYLE (Manager), COURTNEY KOLNBERGER (Goalie), CAROL TAYLOR, JULIE NORTON, JANET MCELHATTON, DOROTHY ROBERTSON (Mann), DEBBIE SMITH, MARIE GILKISON, KAROLINE KAPLIN, GAIL CUMMINGS, BARBARA BOYES, NOREEN LEM, DAVE EVANS (Asst. Coach).
FRONT ROW (L-R): JAMIE HOLT, RIM DAVIDSTICH, STACY SMITH, JANICE MALCOM, APRIL IRELAND, MICHELLE BOKYER (Co-Captain), KEVIN HARDING (Co-Captain).
MISSING FROM PICTURE: PAM GLASS (Manager), JILL JOHNSON (Trainer).
We have come along way since 1890!

Canada Under 19s 2015
References:

I am grateful for the assistance given by the following archives and institutions:

Bergman Österberg Union Archive. Rosemary Gamwell, Archivist.
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Branksome Hall, Toronto. Gayle Reid, Archivist
Bryn Mawr School, Baltimore
Havergal College, Toronto. Debra Latcham
Manuscripts and Special Collections, The University of Nottingham MS 57 (The Revd. J. Magens Mello’s drawings of his voyage to Canada in 1884 to attend a conference of the British Association of Scientific Achievement)
Queen Anne’s School, Caversham
Saint Felix School, Southwold
Sherborne School for Girls, Dorset. Dorothy Goldsack, Archivist
St Leonards School. Angela Tawse, Archivist
US Lacrosse Hall of Fame and Museum
Wycombe Abbey School, High Wycombe
Bill Price, Winnipeg
British Pathe News
Carol Haydn-Evans, private collection
John Wilkes, grandson of John Robert Sparling Wilkes

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