

**Memorial Stadium
And the Mystery of University Women during World War One**

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At the University of Illinois, Memorial Stadium is a focal point of the campus during football season. The pillars on Memorial Stadium are dedicated to students, faculty and alumni who lost their lives in World War I. There is just one pillar dedicated to a woman, on the East Stand by the South side. Her name was Gladys Gilpatrick, a 1917 graduate and member of Alpha Delta Pi sorority. When looking at the history of physical activity and sport at this institution, it seemed Gladys would be an interesting focus for linking sport and student life in the early 20th century. The remarkable aspect of my initial research, however, lay in what wasn't found. There is a stark lack of information regarding Ms. Gilpatrick's efforts in the service, her life at the University, and even her death. In an effort to better understand her, I decided to examine the lives of her sisters in Alpha Delta Pi sorority and other women at the University. What were their roles in the University war effort, how did their lives change after Congress declared war in 1917, and how did physical activity play a part in their lives?

Even with a broader topic, I was unable to locate much information on the lives of women during the First World War. In even the Daily Illini, women are largely ignored, save for a few articles about sorority formals or stunt shows. The war surely did not only affect men, but when looking at primary sources, that is the idea given off. Women are mentioned only in a cursory, passing manner, if at all. For example, in the War Service Records, it states:

In our enthusiasm we point with pride to the figures which tell of the service which Illini have rendered to their country and at the same time we do not forget the alumna and the "coed". The war work of the University of Illinois women has been as noble and inspiring as it has been unheralded. (Thomas A. Clark Papers, p. 8)

Throughout the course of my research, it has become clear that women at this time were not only unheralded, but also passed over. This is likely due to the hegemonic nature of masculinity at this time, in addition to those responsible for keeping the history.

Hegemonic masculinity is the idea that males are socially dominant because females, the supposed subordinate group, either support or accept their dominance. Cultural views become slanted to favor this dominant group (“hegemony” Wikipedia.com). The First World War broke out after nearly 100 years of the Women’s Suffrage Movement where women were campaigning for the ability to vote and for equal rights. It would seem then, that the subordinate group was beginning to rebel against status quo (or dominant males). During the War, however, women eased back into their subordinate and quiet roles in order to help the war effort (National American Women’s Suffrage Association Papers). This explains why there is little information regarding Gladys and her peers in primary data. Men owned and wrote for the newspapers, so did not feel the need to feature women. The purpose of my research, then, is to provide an overview of women’s lives during World War 1, and perhaps provide insight as to why university women continue to be underrepresented in historical records of the era. The research process will be described in detail in the hopes that future students can further expand upon the topic.

Towards deciding on a research topic:

I initially decided to research the history of fitness, body image, and health programs within the Greek community at U of I. My sorority, Alpha Delta Pi, was among the first to include a “wellness clause” within our statements of policy beginning in 2004. I would like to look at programming of our Sigma chapter (founded in 1912) and if there was anything centered on physical activity. I am hoping to center the research on Alpha Delta Pi, but if there is not enough information, I will look at the entire Pan-Hellenic Community.

I looked at the archive resources through the University website, and found quite a few boxes that could hold information, about both Alpha Delta Pi and the Pan-Hellenic community. Initially, I went to the archives and looked through National Pan-Hellenic Conference archives, including sorority handbooks, manuals of information, and images. I also used the Alpha Delta Pi records within the archives, which contain Sigma chapter's minutes, scrapbooks, bylaws, and alumnae information.

At a sorority chapter meeting, I announced my project and asked for any information in-housers may find lying around in closets or the attic that could help my project. I have discovered more chapter minute records that are not yet in the archives and plan on looking through those and then donating them to the archives following my project completion. I also worked with our current historian to find out more information about the development of fitness activities in Alpha Delta Pi. I went to the National Alpha Delta Pi website, as well as the National Pan-Hellenic Conference website to hopefully gain some more insight about wellness issues, but did not see much in the history sections. I wrote to our executive office for further information regarding the passing of the wellness clause in 2004, but received no response.

Upon this initial research, I realized that my topic was far too broad to yield any meaningful results. I began to look for a specific time period, event, or person to help guide my research. That is when I thought of Gladys Gilpatrick, and began developing a more concrete topic and theory.

Continuing the Research Process, and establishing a theory

With a focus firmly established, I attempted to get as much information about Gladys as possible. The only information I was able to find from Memorial Stadium Alumni records and

Alpha Delta Pi information is that she was from Plano, IL and graduated from the University in 1917. She was killed in World War I acting as a nurse. I endeavored to find out a little about her involvement at the University, and most importantly her endeavors related to physical activity. I still hoped to use her specific example to surround an analysis of physical activity among Alpha Delta Pi and other Pan-Hellenic women. Why did they exercise? What goal did they hope to achieve?

There is much research dedicated to the reasons for male physical activity teaching them competition, military skills, and gentlemanly behavior, but little found so far on why female exercise was believed to be important. For many years, it was believed that if women participated in physical activity, they would lose fertility and become injured. Women were said to be too fragile to handle vigorous activity. That was intended to be the main theory around my research, but on a trip to the Archives Research Center, I found much bigger questions staring me in the face.

Besides looking at scrapbooks of women who were members of Alpha Delta Pi during the pre-war and War years, I pulled Veterans Office and Dean of Students files regarding University of Illinois students, alumni and faculty involvement in the war effort. Surprisingly, through three boxes of sources, not one individual female was mentioned. There was no listing of female students who went to or died in the Great War, although I believe Gladys may have been the only one to lose her life. The only time women were mentioned was in a small introductory paragraph within the War Service Records mentioned in the introduction. Unfortunately, within that publication women remained unheralded, as no females were mentioned as having served in the war. Why are women ignored by the Veteran's Office? Were

policies markedly different from today as far as the status of women as veterans? It seems my research is taking a different turn.

I then decided to look at a history of the University in the hopes of discovering the role of females at Illinois from 1910-1920 as well as the war efforts by all students. An archivist began helping me with more research of where women may be listed as having been involved in World War I.

Putting Gladys and her peers into Historical Context, and encountering more questions

Unfortunately, I was unable to locate a history of the University that covers the World War I years thoroughly. Through many conversations with librarians and archivists, I decided that my best course of action was to look through scrapbooks of Gladys's sorority sisters. In this research, I discovered a relatively new group called the Women's Athletic Association, designed to promote female morals through physical activity. As of today, I do not know how many members this group had, or how long the group remained in formation.

I visited the University Archives and looked at Gladys's morgue file. As it turns out, she did not die overseas, but of influenza while working as a student nurse in Philadelphia. It was not mentioned whether she was serving the armed forces or what made her decide to go to nursing school. I was unable to discover any record of Gladys' military involvement through government websites.

I was able to locate data relating to the pillar dedications of Memorial Stadium, but the only information on the only female representative was that her sorority, Alpha Delta Pi, made a donation to have her name etched on the pillar.

While I do not know yet what division of the military Gladys was involved in, a website on Women in WWI says that the War Department discouraged the Army and Navy from allowing women to serve, and the Navy ignored these orders, but the Army only allowed nurses and physical therapists. There was reportedly a push by women's groups, the Army, the YWCA and other organizations to allow women to be more involved in the war effort, but it was dropped when hostilities ceased. Apparently, despite the fact that this was still 23 years before women were allowed to vote, the war efforts were a huge factor in the passing of the 19th amendment. Woodrow Wilson was pulled to the suffragists' side because of the efforts of women during the war.

This website provided a guideline for the type of information I planned on looking for in the DI, from the years 1915-1919. Hopefully this will assist in forming historical context of women at the U of I at the time of the Great War.

The Daily Illini and female involvement

My next step in researching historical context is now naturally to look at the Daily Illinis from that time. I looked through quite a bit of microfilm from the years immediately prior to, during, and after the US involvement in the Great War. There was quite a bit of detail about men being drafted and going to work on farms in Canada, women were rarely mentioned in terms of their contributions to the war effort. Edmund J. James, the President of the University put a letter in the Daily Illini immediately following Congress' declaration of war. Here he stated: "One thing is fairly evident. Men *and women* will be wanted for many different purposes. University men *and women* should be distinctly more available for a variety of positions and

work than the average run of the community.” Here, at the outbreak of war, both male and female students are rated as extremely important to helping the US win the war.

Although James says they are needed for a variety of duties, the only coverage of women in the war effort after that letter was extremely narrow. In nearly 50 Daily Illini front pages examined, only eight specifically referenced women contributing to the war effort, and in only two capacities. They were discussed either in relation to taking nursing classes or toward giving up sorority formals to send money to the troops. Male involvement, whether working on farms in Canada, serving in the military reserves, or going overseas was meticulously covered. Other articles mentioning females referred simply to Stunt Shows and social events in a manner similar to that before the war.

Gladys' involvement in Alpha Delta Pi

Inside my chapter house, I finally found books of chapter minutes and Alpha Delta Pi history from 1912-1915, and surprisingly found myself staring at not only information about Gladys, but also her own handwriting! Gladys Gilpatrick pledged Sigma Chapter of Alpha Delta Pi in 1912 through informal rushing. This happened to be immediately after the local chapter was taken over by the national Alpha Delta Phi sorority (Chapter history p. 148). Shortly after that, the national sorority name was changed to Alpha Delta Pi because of a conflicting fraternity of the same name (Chapter history 38).

Gladys was installed as the Recording Secretary for Sigma chapter of Alpha Delta Pi on June 8, 1914 (Chapter minutes p 88-89). The chapter records contain 33 pages of Gladys' handwriting, but no personal information, and very little information about physical activity among chapter members. Following her term as Recording Secretary, Gladys was elected House

Manager, less than a year after the women moved into a new house on Oregon Street. She was installed as House Manager on May 31, 1915 (Chapter mins, 129), and failed to be mentioned again within the chapter minutes aside from roll call.

Although in the scrapbooks of her sorority sister and contemporary Leah Todd mentioned membership in the Women's Athletic Association, there was no mention of the organization within the chapter minutes or other papers from that time. The only time physical activity mentioned was when participation and planning for the stunt show.

According to a Chi Omega Alumni from the post World War I era, the stunt show was a singing show with costumes (Oral History website). It is not clear at this time whether it involved dancing or other physical activity. The costuming, however, was a way that sorority women used their body as a tool for art. At this time, especially before and after the men returned from World War I, women were still viewed as subordinate to men. They were able to work and help the war effort, but once the men came back, they were expected to go right back into the hegemonic mold. In Alpha Delta Pi, the stunt show was a very important activity nonetheless. It was always one of the first orders of business discussed at chapter meetings. (Chapter mins, p. 107).

Physical Activity of other ADPis

The Alpha Delta Pi History provides quite a bit of information about women's involvement in physical activity at that time. Many sisters during Gladys' time and shortly thereafter were involved in sports teams at the University. For the 1916-17 school year, Sigma chapter's historian wrote:

Inter-class athletics attracted Sigma's girls this year more than previously. Grace Beaty made the freshman hockey team, Esther Scott the sophomore hockey team, and

Marguerite Flock the junior hockey, basketball and baseball team, leading the latter. Jane Owen came into the limelight in tennis this spring by defeating all of her opponents with the exception of the last one (Chapter History, 150).

Clearly, athletic success was important to Alpha Delta Pi women, even back then. Their motivation for competing, however was not clear. No evidence was found that the interclass teams competed against other schools or if the athletic system was affected in any way by the war.

The future of Gladys' and her sisters' histories

Throughout the course of the semester, my research brought about many more questions than answers. Why is there no biographical information about Gladys online where there is about the men who are also included on the pillars at Memorial Stadium? Why didn't the Daily Illini pay much attention to women's athletics, which were clearly thriving during the war, when they covered men? This ethnography will hopefully serve as a starting point for future research regarding women in the University at this time. If Gladys was important enough to be placed on a pillar at Memorial Stadium, shouldn't she be important enough to have her story told? Perhaps during the Illinois Renaissance renovation of the stadium, efforts should be made by professionals to track down information about the often-forgotten heroes carved on the pillars.

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