



Presented by



100 W. Broadway, Frankfort KY

The Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) educates and engages the public through Kentucky's history in order to confront the challenges of the future.

KHS, an agency of the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet, is fully accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is a Smithsonian affiliate.

Girls' Health Benefits from Activities Like Basketball

In its early years, Kentucky girls wanted to play basketball as much, or maybe even more, than boys did.

Basketball came along when societal opinions about physical activity for girls were beginning to change.

Until the 1890s, white middle and upper class society shunned physical exertion for girls and women. They believed the "fairer sex" was incapable of withstanding exertion without harmful consequences, especially to their reproductive system.

In the late 19th century, as white women began to find a limited place in the workplace and in higher education, people began to change their minds and advocate for the health benefits of physical activity—to a point.

The debate would play out for years and have tangible consequences for Kentucky girls.



Girls play ball at Villa Madonna, in Kenton County, circa 1912-1913. Mary Agnes McGregor, a 1913 graduate, throws the ball. (*Ohio River Portrait Project, Kentucky Historical Society.*)