



A Notable Woman – Caroline Crawford

It was a woman who gave UWSP the game of basketball.

Caroline Crawford, one of the original faculty members of this institution, was in charge of the physical training instructional program, with training from Hemenway Gymnasium of Harvard University.

When she came to Stevens Point, her work was considered innovative for the time. In some respects, she was involved in some formidable foundation work for today's wellness program here.

But because of the large following the sport of basketball enjoys nationwide, Crawford will probably be remembered most for her role in organizing the first teams and games to advance the sport in Stevens Point. That was in the fall and winter of 1897-98.

She formed two women's teams and two men's teams from her physical training classes. Seven students were chosen for each squad.

Having been educated in the East, she had the advantage of being introduced to basketball (it was begun in 1891 in Massachusetts) in its earliest days and was one of few people in Wisconsin knowledgeable of the sport when she began promoting it here.

The first game she organized, on Jan. 25, 1898, was in the gymnasium of Old Main, attracting about 350 townspeople and students. The women played first, ending their game in a 4-4 tie. The men's teams ended with a 5-3 score.

The noted Wisconsin educator Mary D. Bradford, in her memoirs, recalled Crawford as an outstanding physical educator. Bradford wrote: "Physical measurements of each student and of all children in the practice school in Stevens Point were taken by Miss Crawford, the well-qualified director of all this work, and when necessary, these were made the bases of specially prescribed exercises suited to the needs of each individual."

It was Crawford's intent to correct such problems as crooked spines and undeveloped muscles, and she was credited with several impressive successes.

Sports innovator and outstanding teacher were not the extent of her accomplishments here. She was interested in music, enjoying playing piano and composing music. One of her works, a piano solo entitled "Sur la Grace a Sweet Briar," was published.

In about 1900, Crawford organized the first school dance at the normal school.

Crawford left Stevens Point in 1899 to join the faculty of the Chicago Normal School. She later taught at the University of Chicago and Columbia University in New York City.