

From 1860s Lambeth to Niagara in the 1900s: Imitation and Innovation amongst Female Natationists.

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In the late Victorian period, English amateur sportsmen created regulatory bodies to govern their activities, organisations that proved highly effective in reinforcing the ongoing exclusion of both women and working class participants, especially professionals. Faced by a 'double jeopardy', working class females who had been making a living from displaying their physical talents retreated further from an already limited competitive arena into the world of entertainment. Although working class women generally lacked the necessary freedom of choice, money and time for leisure activities, sports-like amusements had always provided an alternative working environment for a very small number of individuals. During the eighteenth century, the 'European Championess' Elizabeth Stokes recorded forty-five boxing victories and a century later female pedestrianism established an intermittent presence in the Victorian sporting landscape. Ada Anderson worked as an entertainer and theatre manageress before becoming a pedestrienne in 1877, performing a number of long-distance walks including 1,500 miles in 1,000 hours at Leeds in 1878. Her appearances in America stimulated a pedestrian vogue involving over a hundred working class women, many of whom subsequently became professional cyclists. Elsewhere, the formation in 1890 of the Original English Lady Cricketers, recruited from the lower-middle and upper-lower classes, marked the creation of the first professional women's teams in any sport.¹

The most prominent female professionals of the period were swimmers and, by the end of the century, working class 'naiads' and 'mermaids' were performing before all social classes, in the variety theatre as well as in the swimming pool. Lurline exhibited in a crystal aquarium at the *Oxford Music Hall* in the 1890s and in October 1889, Ada Webb, 'Champion Lady High Diver of the World and Queen of the Crystal Tank', appeared at the *Canterbury Theatre of Varieties* where her underwater feats included eating, drinking, smoking, peeling an apple, answering questions, sewing, singing, taking snuff and writing.² During 1898, Elise Wallenda remained underwater at the *Alhambra* for four minutes forty-five and a half seconds. Annie Luker's dives from the Westminster Aquarium roof were widely admired and Marie Finney was presented with a gold medal in recognition of her 'clever and plucky dive from London-bridge' prior to giving an exhibition at the *Trocadero Music Hall* in 1889. Many natationists also generated careers as swimming teachers, including Fanny Easton and Mrs. Newman.³

At Margate in 1884 Professor Frederick Beckwith was teaching in one bath whilst his 'accomplished mermaid of a daughter', Agnes, was teaching women's classes in the other.⁴ Frederick involved the whole of his immediate and most of his extended family in aquatic activities between 1850 and 1900 and the Beckwiths became the most renowned swimming family in Britain, while Agnes's appearances in North America created such an impression that her name became synonymous with female swimming excellence. Recognising the commercial potential, American natationists Cora MacFarland and Clara Sabeau both claimed a Beckwith lineage, adopted Agnes's performance routines and made successful careers as the 'Champion Lady Swimmer of the World'. All three women had a lifetime's association with swimming, as teachers, competitors and performers, and, in order to uncover commonalities, their stories are presented here as a series of short biographies. Although Bourdieu regarded biographies as illusions, arguing that the straightforward, one-dimensional life story could not exist and that lived lives were chaos, he recognised that individual life-stories can be seen as reflections of social structures and it is by exploring the lives of individuals that scholars can illuminate what Mills called the 'historical push and shove' of society. Merely by existing, each person contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of society and to the course of its history, and Victorian working class females were not merely the passive victims of historical processes but active agents who participated in shaping their world.⁵

Agnes Beckwith

On 24 August 1875, Captain Matthew Webb became the first person to swim the English Channel, immediately establishing himself as a Victorian celebrity. Partly to 'puff up' himself and Agnes, Beckwith took advantage of the interest generated by Webb's success and embarked on a series of endurance swims featuring his daughter, beginning in September

1875 with the fourteen-year-old swimming five miles in the Thames.⁶ In 1876, Agnes swam three quarters of a mile in the Tyne and completed over ten miles in the Thames when large crowds watched her using breaststroke, interspersed with displays of trick swimming.⁷ In 1878, the now seventeen-year-old swam twenty miles in the Thames and subsequently expressed a desire to attempt the Channel.⁸ Although this never materialised, Agnes continued endurance displays and, at the Westminster Royal Aquarium in 1880, she completed a thirty-hour swim, taking all her meals in the water and reading accounts of her swim while still swimming.⁹ Agnes subsequently swam for a hundred hours in six days in the Aquarium whale tank and later advertisements described her as the 'Heroine of the 100 hours' swim'.¹⁰

While endurance swimming came in for criticism because of the physical excesses involved, racing proved slightly more acceptable and Agnes did compete in a three match series against Laura Saigeman.¹¹ Ornamental swimming was considered the most appropriate activity for female natationists and aquatic displays utilising swimming baths and glass tanks in aquaria, circuses and music halls provided extensive opportunities for swimming entrepreneurs. Agnes began this type of performance in 1865 and she was appearing regularly at Lambeth Baths by the 1870s. In 1872, Agnes and Willie debuted as *Les Enfants Poissons* in a plate glass aquarium at the *Porcherons Music Hall* in Paris and Agnes was a main attraction at the Brighton aquarium.¹² In the 1880s, Agnes had 151 weeks of continuous engagement at the Westminster Aquarium, where she was 'a veritable mermaid', swimming, floating, diving and turning somersaults through hoops, as well as kissing her hand to spectators in 'the most bewitching style'.¹³

In 1882, Agnes married William Taylor, a theatrical agent who was already managing the family, although she kept the Beckwith name for public performances.¹⁴ Agnes exhibited in North America in 1883 and swam in France and Belgium during the 1880s as well as appearing with Hengler's Cirque in Liverpool and Glasgow and with Barnum's 'Greatest Show on Earth' at Madison Square Garden in 1887. An American reporter recalled the excitement in the crowd when Agnes stepped out onto the elevated stage and bowed gracefully before diving into a huge water tank. The 'picturesque aquatic expert' was a comely, blue-eyed, twenty-four-year old English girl with soft hair hung in small curls upon her shoulders. A flowing robe of old gold was wrapped about her from her throat to her feet as she stepped out upon the platform. She tossed off her rubber overshoes and, then flinging aside the robe, she revealed her limbs encased in flesh-coloured tights and a dark-hued jersey drawn snugly about her waist. She dived and waltzed like a swan, turned somersaults, swam under water and climaxed her performance by propelling herself along with graceful undulations of the body while her hands and feet were bound together. During this visit, Agnes gave an interview that established something of a template for her imitators. She said that she had inherited the art from her father, Professor Frederick Beckwith, and that she had learned to be as fond of water as a fish in the Lambeth baths when she was only four years old. She exaggerated somewhat in saying she had been twelve-years-old when she first swam publically in the Thames but she faithfully recalled her subsequent swims of ten and twenty miles, as well as her continuous swims of thirty hours and one hundred hours in a week.¹⁵

Agnes returned to England to lead a troupe of female swimmers, whose 'graceful and expert performances' popularised swimming and who pleased everyone by their charming appearance in their pretty costumes,¹⁶ reinforcing the impression that the appeal of female natationists often had as much to do with their physical appearance as their skill. Despite the closure of the Westminster Aquarium and the deaths of her father and brothers during the 1890s, Agnes carried on exhibiting even though her physical charms may have diminished. In February 1903, she had her only child, William Walter Beckwith Taylor, who subsequently performed alongside his mother as 'the youngest swimmer in the World', and Agnes continued to perform and teach at venues as far afield as Hastings, Dover, Aylesbury and Manchester. By 1911, however, she was describing herself as an ex-professional swimmer.¹⁷ In 1916, Agnes married Leopold Solomons and the family name was gradually anglicised to 'Beckwith' Saunders with son William becoming Jack Beckwith Saunders. Agnes, Jack, and his family, sailed for South Africa in 1948, eventually settling in Port Elizabeth. A year later, Agnes was admitted to Nazareth House where she died on 10 July 1951.¹⁸

The 'Beckwith' name

Even in England, the identity of Beckwith troupe members was often blurred because of the practice of assigning the family name to all and sundry, irrespective of familial relationships. Some, like Agnes's half-sister Lizzie, the professor's youngest daughter, were genuine 'Beckwiths' and Frederick employed Lizzie, or 'Nellie', in his shows from a young age.¹⁹ By 1896, Lizzie had also established herself as a song and dance artist,²⁰ and she left for America in 1904 to appear in variety. She married a fellow vaudeville artiste later that year but died from pneumonia in Colorado only three months later.²¹ Charles Beckwith's daughter Aggie performed at Lambeth Baths in 1899²² and Willie's wife, Emma, an accomplished ornamental swimmer,²³ appeared regularly with Agnes and her troupe, often as 'Ethel', while non-familial 'Beckwiths' included Dora, May and Mabel.²⁴

Following Agnes's performances in 1887, the Beckwith name appeared in American newspaper reports even after her return to England. An Annie Beckwith, described as a 'noted English natator' who had supposedly won a six days' floating competition in London, emerged in Boston in 1888. Annie was described as a charming young woman, not yet nineteen but 'very womanly' in appearance, almost five feet five inches tall, weighing about 140lbs and with an almost perfect figure, a very sweet face and blonde hair. Reports described her as the first cousin of Miss Agnes Beckwith, the natational 'wonder of the world'. A year later, newspapers were reporting a six-day contest in Boston involving eighteen-year-old Alice Beckwith, a cousin of the 'famous English swimmers' Agnes and Willie Beckwith.²⁵ It is probable that 'Annie' and/or 'Alice' were pseudonyms and that, given their reported ages, they were, in fact, either Clara or Cora 'Beckwith', American born natationists who both had long and successful careers.

Clara 'Beckwith'

Clara Maria Sabeau, born in Nova Scotia in October 1870,²⁶ went to Boston around 1887 where she was recruited as a performer in the Boston American Swimming Pool and subsequently promoted as Clara 'Beckwith'.²⁷ By 1889, her repertoire included tank displays and competitive swimming for wagers, including a six-day event against Valeska Neilson, 'champion of Germany'.²⁸ During 1890, Clara appeared with a group of young females in the large tank at the Boston Grand Museum and reports in 1891 recorded the 'Diving, Swimming and daring Feats' given by Clara, 'Champion Female Swimmer of the world'.²⁹ In 1893, she was at Tony Pastor's Theatre as the 'Woman Fish', or 'Water Queen', who lived, ate, walked, played, waltzed, read and acted under the water, while, at the Summer Garden in 1894, she was a 'bewitching, captivating Water Nymph'.³⁰ During 1895 and 1896, Clara 'disported herself in her swimming tank' day and night at Proctor's Theatre and at Proctor's Pleasure Palace in New York, alongside vaudeville, minstrelsy, acrobats and the 'original comedy elephants'.³¹

Her show was described in detail in 1893. After 'the champion lady swimmer of the world,' had been introduced, the 'trim figure in Mephistophelian red tripped up the stepladder to the top of the tank and sank into the water'. When submerged she turned somersaults and lay at the bottom as if sleeping. She played with a 60lb dumbbell underwater, ate a banana, drank a bottle of milk and then chalked her name on a slate, which she pressed against the sides for the audience to read. She sewed two pieces of cloth together, taking about twenty-five stitches without surfacing, and then walked along the bottom on her hands. Her exhibition of a person drowning was so realistic that many spectators 'experienced cold chills' at her screams. She sank to the bottom like a drowning body and lay face downward, after which she rose to the surface and floated like a dead body before turning over and becoming again 'the modern mermaid'.³²

Clara said she was five feet four inches tall although 1893 reports described her as so upright that she looked taller and younger than her given age of twenty-five, with dark brown hair, grey and clear eyes and a fine complexion. She was a well-formed, strong athlete who seemed lighter than her average weight of 150lbs and it was difficult to believe that she could lift 200lbs dead weight. In her swimming suit Clara showed the almost perfect development which her training had produced.³³

Clara married Stanley McInnis in June 1898, which probably accounts for the fact that there are few references to her in subsequent years, and when he died in 1907, he left Clara a wealthy widow.³⁴ In a rare display of honesty regarding her origins, Clara described herself at her marriage as Clara Marie Sabean born in October 1870 in Nova Scotia but in the 1901 census, she declared she was twenty-seven having been born in 1873 in England and arriving in Canada in 1887. When she married Clement Miller in 1908, Clara called herself Clara M. Beckwith McInnis, born circa 1872 in England. In 1910, Clara claimed she was thirty-six, that she had been born in England and that she had arrived in America in 1890.³⁵ This heritage had been crafted over some years and was made explicit in her 1893 autobiography, which claimed she had been born in Lambeth in October 1867. Her father, William Manning Beckwith, had been champion swimmer of England for ten consecutive years and, after he relinquished the title, it had passed to her brother Willie who had successfully defended it ever since. Her younger brother, Charles, was an excellent swimmer while Agnes, her sister, was an expert of the highest order. Clara's first public appearance had been when she was thirteen-years-old, after which her father had predicted that eventually she would be recognised as the 'Champion Lady Swimmer of the World.' With his encouragement, she had issued challenges to English female professionals but, after two years of no acceptances, the title of Champion had been conceded to her, following which Clara said 'farewell to Lambeth and its fond associations', and travelled to Boston in 1882.³⁶

In a widely syndicated newspaper interview in July 1893, Clara reinforced her Beckwith origins in the public imagination. She had been born in Lambeth, England, and was a member of the famous Beckwith family of swimmers. When asked how she had learnt to swim she said 'Oh, it's born in me, I guess...All my family swim...Father and Willie and Charley and my sister Agnes.' Clara went on:

'We lived near the beach, and I was always running down to the water, but I had never been taught to swim and I didn't know how. One day, when I was twelve years old and I was paddling around a big wave came along and carried me off my feet. I caught my breath and struck right out with a breaststroke and, because I did not know how to turn around, I kept on swimming until someone saw me and came to my rescue in a boat.'³⁷

In her autobiography, Clara observed that during her professional career the press had called her 'The Modern Mermaid,' 'Neptune's favored daughter,' 'The water Nymph' and 'Naiad of the deep.' She was only grateful that 'her nature was not susceptible to flattery' although she was proud of being recognised as the 'Champion lady Swimmer of the World', an achievement acquired by perseverance, hard work and determination. It was her earnest wish, apparently, in reciting her 'life in the water' to avoid all semblance of egotism and self-laudation.³⁸ It has to be said that this went somewhat against the normal practices of professional natationists, including Clara, and Cora 'Beckwith', another self-proclaimed 'Champion Lady swimmer of the World', proved to be far less reticent.

Cora 'Beckwith'

Cora McFarland was born in 1869 in Maine and, within twenty years, she had become a professional natationist performing as Cora 'Beckwith' in the tank at the Grand Dime Museum. The bill included future husband Charles M. Ernest who performed a 'burnt cork comedy' routine, involving stereotypical caricatures of a black person.³⁹ Cora, the 'champion lady swimmer of the world', performed at the Retail Clerks' Picnic at Wildwood in 1893, lived in a tank for seven days at the Casino in 1894⁴⁰ and was the main feature at the Circus Royal and Venetian Water Carnival in San Francisco in 1895 where she introduced 'many strange tricks of her own invention'. Apparently, she had been 'lionized by society' which might have spoiled her but for the 'brave little lady's level head'.⁴¹

Theatre impresario Jake Rosenthal, who managed both Al Jolson and Houdini, became Cora's manager in 1895 and married her after she divorced Charles.⁴² Jake promoted Cora to managers of seaside and summer resorts, summer gardens, outdoor entertainments and vaudeville houses as an exponent of natatorial feats. She floated for thirty days at the Boston Zoo and her troupe of young swimmers could be seen in a tank in the lecture hall at Austin and

Stone's Museum during 1898.⁴³ In 1899, Cora could be seen at Fairmount Park in June, performing and giving swimming lessons to women,⁴⁴ and again at Cedar Point in July where, among other feats, she demonstrated the English sidestroke, her own invention – the Beckwith backward sweep, the dead float, the double overhead stroke and waltzing.⁴⁵

At the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo in 1901, Cora's Natatorium, one of the few concessions that made money, featured the 'World's Greatest swimmer, Champion Trick and fancy swimmer of All Europe and Pan American'. For between fifteen and twenty-five cents she could be seen 'living, sleeping, and eating' in a tank filled with four feet of water for up to nine hours every day.⁴⁶ Cora had 'sleek hair as black as jet, with flesh as soft and pliable as that of a baby', her body shape had been moulded by its long caress with water and, while 'a trifle stout', it was 'in its full strength of a superb womanhood'. Her hands and feet were 'prettily turned' and her shoulders and torso were as finely developed as 'those of the most expert boxer'.⁴⁷

Just as Agnes spent her summers at English seaside resorts, Cora established her own season touring fairs, carnivals and festivals, although she had to take the paraphernalia of her performances with her since there were few swimming baths.⁴⁸ Between 1902 and 1904, Cora appeared at McBeth's Park, at the Logan Free Carnival and as the 'human fish' at a fair and carnival in Saratoga. At the 'Redmen's Powwow and carnival' in 1904 she illustrated the strokes used by different nations, strokes of her own design and a 'mystifying' method of floating in which not a muscle moved.⁴⁹ Like Agnes, Cora spent the winters touring indoor facilities with a troupe of female swimmers. At the Clark Street Dime Museum in 1901, Cora's women swimmers were a chief attraction, and her 'Neptune's Daughters', featuring four young women performing trick and fancy diving at the Strand in 1917, was considered one of the 'prettiest' aquatic entertainments in vaudeville.⁵⁰

When Cora died in 1924 her death certificate referred to her as Cora 'Beckwith' Rosenthal.⁵¹ During her lifetime, reports had consistently established connections between her and the genuine Beckwith family both in terms of lineage and of natational performances. Performing at the Casino in 1894 she was referred to as Cora Beckwith of England, in 1895 she was described as having delighted the 'British public for years' and in 1899 she was advertised as a British subject straight from the Royal Aquarium in London.⁵² Cora contributed to the deception, describing how she had been born into an English family of noted swimmers and she had taken to the water as a two-year-old following the example of her father, a famous swimming professional and 'keeper of the Royal Aquarium at Westminster'. According to Cora she had started exhibiting at five, swum the Thames at eleven, jumped from London bridge when she was thirteen and floated ten hours a day for forty consecutive days.⁵³

'Puffing up' Cora: The Niagara rapids 'ballyhoo'

A reporter observed in 1899 that the 'ballyhoo' surrounding Cora's shows was one of its major drawing cards⁵⁴ and Cora's most outrageous claim was that she had swum the English Channel, aged fifteen or sixteen, either alongside Webb or having been the only female or indeed person to have ever done so.⁵⁵ Her aquatic 'feats' had made her 'the most talked of woman in the world' and Cora extended this 'ballyhoo' by announcing regularly that she would swim the Niagara rapids. The idea first emerged in 1895, although it was really in 1901, at the time of her engagement at the Pan-American Exposition, that Cora revived the prospect of swimming the rapids.⁵⁶ When asked if she was not worried that she would meet the fate of Webb, who had drowned there, she said:-

'I have no fear of the rapids. I have visited them three times recently and thrown sticks and stones into the water and have failed to find anything awful about the rapids. I shall visit them every Sunday from now until the date of my performance to study the currents and get the proper bearings. I expect to get through the rapids without any difficulty by floating on my back'.⁵⁷

In another interview, Cora said she had seen Webb swim to his death after she had told him 'he was foolish to keep so near the Canadian shore'. There was only one thing in the gorge which

frightened her, 'a razorlike lip of a ledge of bright red granite' although she had found a way to avoid it. According to Cora, she was able to float better than Webb and, since she could also stay underwater for four minutes, her plan was to float down the rapids making no movements except those necessary to keep her nose and mouth above water.⁵⁸

The announcement certainly generated the requisite interest. Cora was invited to Richmond to give an exhibition and George Farrell who was preparing to cross the Falls on a bicycle delayed his attempt because Cora wanted him to do a double act with her.⁵⁹ Unsurprisingly, this attempt did not materialise although the 'ballyhoo' was repeated in 1902, 1903, and again in 1904 when Cora 'upped the stakes' by declaring that she would swim the rapids 'or perish'.⁶⁰ *The Niagara Falls Gazette* was sceptical about her 'fairy tales' proposing a swim through the rapids. Cora had previously attracted notoriety by saying she intended to swim the rapids and now she was 'handing out a few dope stories' again. Although a good swimmer, Cora 'never swam the whirlpool rapids and does not intend to'. In 1912, Cora again announced a Niagara attempt and, despite the lack of concrete evidence, it was reported in 1917 that 'some years ago' she had swum 'a dangerous passage at Niagara Falls, one which was never before accomplished by a lady swimmer'.⁶¹

Some reflections

The close relationship between entertainment and sport highlighted here by the biographies of these 'Beckwith' natationists was not unique to the activity, or to the period, since professional athletes, aware of the transitory nature of their earning potential, have always explored every potential outlet in order to capitalise on their reputation. While women earning their living by swimming-related activities were few in number, their public performances were still receiving considerable publicity around the turn of the twentieth century, at which point Agnes remained the most prominent female swimmer in the public imagination, both at home and abroad. Although she was never able to convert this social capital into personal financial capital, her appearances in America in 1883 and 1887 clearly stimulated imitation and, by adopting the name and appropriating the methods and techniques of the original, both Clara and Cora transported her skills across America. There is some evidence that these two women were aware of each other's existence. In 1889, Clara concluded that Cora had decided not to respond to her challenge for a six days' swimming match so she offered her rival for the title of champion woman swimmer another chance to prove her superiority.⁶² The fact that Cora did not respond is almost certainly a sign of good judgement since the swimming careers of the two women would suggest that Clara was more used to racing in this kind of event and would have started with an advantage. This has echoes of the reluctance of Frederick and Agnes to engage in head-to-head races with opponents who were patently faster over short distances, since defeat would dent Agnes's status as the world's leading female natationist.

Much more work needs to be done to uncover what Bale calls the 'layers of truth'⁶³ regarding these natatorial careers but, even at this stage, these women's lives raise some interesting points, not least about the use of physical display as entertainment, making it a distinct entity and separate from sport. Other questions arise concerning the methods used by professionals to 'puff up', the content of natatorial displays, the influence of males as managers and husbands, and the use of emerging technology. Clara, who generally appeared on stages rather than at fairs, performed on one occasion in a tank ten feet long, four feet wide and eight feet deep containing salted water and heated to 92° while, at the Washington Lyceum, she had a tank fifty feet long.⁶⁴ Because her summer was predominantly spent in rural fairs, the organisation and equipment required by Cora was substantial and her entourage was extensive. Charles Snyder of Charleston had been her showman in 1897 but, by 1912, her roster included Jake Rosenthal, manager and lecturer, George Hobbs, lecturer and press agent, C.H. Jennings, Mrs. G.M. Hodge, ticket seller, Clarence Mitchell, in charge of natatorium, and Will Clemens, Jr., in charge of the canvas. At the Circus Royal and Venetian Water Carnival in San Francisco in 1895, the circus ring was covered with a 'tremendous rubber', filled with four feet of water, and lithographs of her performances were available later that year.⁶⁵ In 1899, the spectacular night exhibition she gave in Fairmount Park was lit by searchlights while the front of her 'Blue Grotto' on West Midway later that year, which resembled the entrance to a huge stone cave, was surrounded by electric lights. When Cora appeared at the Logan Free Carnival

in 1903 an excavation fifty feet by twenty feet was made for the exhibition and, in 1904, she exhibited in a portable tank fifty feet long. In 1906, Cora utilised a new outfit for the season, including a canvas, a ten-foot by fifty-foot tank and a special coach and baggage car. In 1907, she used another new tent and a tank holding 40,000 gallons of water, heated by the boiler that powered the merry-go-round, while at the 1908 Marion Inter-State Fair Cora performed in an artificial lake.⁶⁶

Part of this emerging technology was the improvement in communications and this narrative highlights the international reach of the Beckwith 'brand'. By adopting the name and appropriating the methods and techniques of Agnes, both Clara and Cora perpetuated the 'Beckwith' legend and, in a world that was less globalised than it is today, it was comparatively easy for them to duplicate routines without fear of any consequences, especially since the professor and his sons died during the 1890s. Although Lizzie was performing in America at the same time as Cora was touring the rural fairs, no one was ever really in a position to dispute either the appropriation of the Beckwith name or the feats that had proved popular with the paying public. In fact, even if the real Beckwiths had been aware of these initiatives, they may have remained sanguine about anything that kept the name 'Beckwith' in the public arena. If imitation really is the sincerest form of flattery then the original Beckwiths may have been perfectly satisfied with the situation.

Notes

1 *Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer*, October 5, 1728; November 23, 1728; *Daily Post*, June 6, 1732; Census 1871 RG101487: 2; Dahn Shaulis, 'Pedestriennes: Newsworthy but Controversial Women in Sporting Entertainment', *Journal of Sport History*, 26, no.1 (1999): 31-35; Kathleen E. McCrone, 'Class, Gender, and English Women's Sport, c. 1890-1914', *Journal of Sport History*, 18, no. 1 (1991): 166.

2 Robert Watson, 'Comparative Generations', in *Swimmers and Swimming or, The Swimmers Album*, Charles Newman (London, Henry Kemshead, 1899), 22; British Library *Evan* 645. *Canterbury Theatre of Varieties*, October 14, 1889; *Era*, January 5, 1889, 25; 23 August 23, 1890, 22; April 21, 1894, 26; *Penny Illustrated*, March 5 1887, 151; *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, September 29, 1883, 11; June 23, 1885, 4.

3 *Manchester Times*, September 21, 1900, 8; *Daily News*, December 20, 1889, 3; *Licensed Victuallers' Mirror*, April 15, 1890, 174; Census Returns. Easton 1881 (337/61/1818), 1891 (141/84/67), 1901 (1253/76/40), 1911 (RG147287RG78PN355RD132SD3ED10SN146).

4 *Era*, June 14, 1884, 5; *Penny Illustrated*, **May 27, 1876, 10**; July 19, 1884, 2, 6; *Fun*, August 6, 1884, 57; Agnes Alice Beckwith, GRO (1861/birth/September/Lambeth/1d/319) born 14 August.

5 Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 12; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Random House, 1963).

6 *Manchester Guardian*, September 2, 1875, 8; *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, September 3, 1875, 2; *New York Times*, September 18, 1875, 12; *North Otago Times*, November 25 1875, 5; *Grey River Argus*, November 9, 1875, 2.

7 **Newcastle Courant**, May 5, 1876, **5**; *Daily News*, July 6 1876, 3; *New York Times*, July 18 1876, 8 citing the *London Echo*, July 6, 1876; *Otago Witness*, September 9, 1876, 17; September 30, 1876, 5.

8 *Penny Illustrated*, July 27, 1878, 14; *Bell's Life*, August 10, 1878, 12.

9 *Bells Life*, May 8, 1880, 8; May 15, 1880, 12; *Reynolds's Newspaper*, May 9, 1880, 8-9; *Inter Ocean*, May 29, 1880; *Evening Post*, July 12, 1880, 2; British Library. *Evan*. 2756 London Westminster Royal Aquarium 1880 Poster.

10 *Bell's Life*, June 26, 1880, 8-9; July 3, 1880, 8; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, June 27, 1880, 5; July 4, 1880, 1; *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, July 3, 1880, 6.

11 *The Times*, August 26, 1879, 9; *Penny Illustrated*, August 30, 1879, 10; *Graphic*, August 30, 1879, 211; *Northern Echo*, August 20, 1894, 3; *Bell's Life*, September 27, 1879, 5.

12 *Era*, January 26, 1868, 16; March 29, 1868, 11; *Liverpool Mercury*, February 15, 1868, 6; *Penny Illustrated*, June 19, 1869), 391; *Bell's Life*, September 21, 1870, 4; July 22, 1871, 9; *Era*, February 4, 1872, 10; August 18, 1872, 5.

13 *Baily's Monthly Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, April 1884, XLII(290): 183; *Swimming Notes*, May 3, 1884, 8; *Bell's Life*, August 17, 1872, 6; September 26, 1874, 8; November 14, 1874, 8; *Era*, August 18, 1872, 5; May 4 1873, 7; May 18, 1873, 3; June 1, 1873, 3; August 10, 1873, 3; August 17, 1873, 3; November 9, 1873, 3.

14 Agnes Alice Beckwith GRO (1882/marriage/March/Lambeth/1d/520). Census Returns 1891 (394/27/12), 1901 (383/89/3).

15 *Penny Illustrated*, May 5, 1883, 279; August 18, 1883, 10; *Reynolds's Newspaper*, May 13, 1883, 8; *New York Times*, June 5, 1883, 2; *Macon Weekly Telegraph*, September 30 1883, 6; *New York Clipper*, June 16, 1883), 208; *Bell's Life*, May 6, 1882, 6; *Liverpool Mercury*, February 8, 1887, 5; *Era*, March 5, 1887, 16; *New York Clipper*, April 23, 1887, 94; *Lancaster Daily Intelligencer*, April 2, 1887, 4.

16 *Era*, January 1, 1898, 22; January 29, 1898, 20, 22; January 21, 1899, 20; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, December 24, 1899, 13.

17 *Daily Mirror*, August 8, 1904, 2; August 10, 1904, 2; August 22, 1904, 2; September 21, 1904, 10; September 23, 1904, 10; *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, December 31, 1908, 3; *Manchester Guardian*, June 20, 1910, 1; June 23, 1910, 1; June 24, 1910, 1; June 25, 1910, 1; June 27, 1910, 1; June 28, 1910, 1; Census 1911 (RG14PN7747 RG78PN383 RD141 SD1 ED8 SN122).

18 GRO (1916/marriage/July/Exeter/5b/174); GRO (1941/death/October/Surrey/2a/443); Principal Probate Registry of England and Wales, Llandudno, March 1942; Manifest List for Union Castle Line, The Carnarvon Castle departing Southampton 31 August 1948; Nazareth House Records.

19 *Bell's Life*, May 4, 1886, 1; May 25, 1886, 1; *Era*, June 15, 1889, 15; June 7, 1890; August 29, 1891, 15; September 5, 1891, 8; *Northern Echo*, August 12, 1890, 4; *Licensed Victuallers' Mirror*, October 13, 1891, 490; *Horse and Hound, A Journal of Sport and Agriculture*, September 23, 1893, 593.

20 *Era*, June 23, 1888, 15; May 25, 1889, 20; August 10, 1889, 7; September 12, 1896, 21; September 19, 1896, 19; September 26, 1896, 20; October 3, 1896, 22; October 24, 1896, 31; November 7, 1896, 28; November 14, 1896, 23; December 5, 1896, 31, 32; January 23, 1897, 22, 29; February 6, 1897, 16; February 13, 1897, 15, 19; September 11, 1897, 15; November 27, 1897, 14, 30; December 11, 1897, 26; December 25, 1897, 21; January 8, 1898, 9; February 5, 1898, 29; February 12, 1898, 19; February 19, 1898, 24; February 26, 1898, 19, 20; April 2, 1898, 34; May 21, 1898, 26.

21 Manifest List for S.S. Umbria arriving in New York July 1904; *Morning Telegraph*, September 30, 1904, 6; *Daily Mirror*, March 1, 1905, 6; *Nottingham Evening Post*, March 4, 1905, 6.

22 *Era*, June 10, 1899, 19. GRO Agnes Harriett Beckwith (1884/birth/December/Lambeth/1d/367). Census 1891 (393/58/37). GRO (1884/marriage/June/Chelsea/1a/579) Charles Beckwith, 23, teacher of swimming, Emily Beckwith, 24, Agnes Beckwith, 6, Charles Beckwith, 4.

23 Newman, *Swimmers or Swimming or, The Swimmers Album*; GRO (1877/marriage/December/Lambeth/1d/688); Census 1891 (391/132/7) 281 Kennington Road, Lambeth, William H. Beckwith, 33, professional swimmer, Emma Beckwith Wife, 33, Frederick E. Beckwith Son, 4; *Era*, July 30, 1892; August 6, 1892, 22. Emma, Willie and son Frederick appeared together at Scarborough alongside Olivette Flower.

24 *Era*, October 5, 1895, 12; October 19, 1895, 7; February 1, 1896, 16; February 29, 1896, 8; March 7, 1896, 21; May 9, 1896, 23; October 10, 1896, 22; January 23, 1897, 29; May 8, 1897, 20; February 27, 1897, 23; May 25, 1889, 20; July 4, 1891, 16; September 26, 1896, 21.

25 *Boston Herald*, November 6, 1888, 3/8; *Star*, March 6, 1889, 3.

26 The Library and Archives Canada. 1871 Census, Clarence, Annapolis, Nova Scotia; Roll, C-10543; Page#6; Family No, 21; 1881 Census, New Caledonia, Annapolis, Nova Scotia; Roll, C-13172; Page#6; Family No, 27.

27 Charlotte Isabella Perkins, *The Romance of Old Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia*, 1934, revised 1952.

28 *New York Clipper*, August 10, 1888-1890, 355; *Ploughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, September 26, 1889, 2; *New York Times*, September 28, 1889.

29 *New York Clipper*, August 9, 1890, 342; *Boston Daily Globe*, September 23, 1890, 2; *Lowell Daily Courier*, June 30, 1891; July 8, 1891; July 16, 1891; August 10, 1891.

30 *Washington Bee*, May 20, 1893; *The Sun*, July 17, 1893, 8; October 29, 1893, 3; *Evening Telegram*, July 18, 1893, 4; *New York Times*, October 29, 1893; *New York Daily Tribune*, October 29, 1893, 22; *Washington Times*, August 14, 1894, 3.

31 *New York Times*, August 18, 1895, 11; October 24, 1895, 13; November 3, 1895; November 24, 1895, 12; *Era*, August 24, 1895; October 26, 1895; November 9, 1895; *New York Daily Tribune*, November 19, 1895, 5; *New York Times*, November 19, 1895, 5; *The Sun*, November 24, 1895, 3; *Spirit of the Times*, December 21, 1895, 752; *New York Dramatic Mirror*, December 21, 1895, 19; *Era*, February 1, 1896.

32 *Wheeling Register*, July 29, 1893; *Auburn Bulletin*, July/August 1893, 6; *Lewiston Evening Journal*, July 31, 1893, 2.

- 33 Clara Beckwith, *In the Swim, Autobiography of Miss Clara Beckwith, The World's Champion Lady Swimmer. The Theory and Practice of Swimming Explained and Illustrated by the Modern Mermaid* (Baltimore, Wm. U. Day Printing Co. 1893). No page numbers; *Wheeling Register*, July 29, 1893; *Auburn Bulletin* July/August 1893, 6; *Lewiston Evening Journal*, July 31, 1893, 2.
- 34 *Sun*, March 26, 1899, 9; March 29, 1899, 7; *Era*, April 15, 1899; Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online 1901-1910 (Volume XIII) [I. I. Mayba](#) 2000 University of Toronto/Université Laval (afn,1154-6S5). Father, Joshua Manning Sabean (afn, 114X-7D2). Mother, Abigail Jane Wade (afn, 114X-7F8). Spouse, S. W. McInnis Hon. (afn, 1154-6RX); Perkins, *The Romance of Old Annapolis Royal*.
- 35 The Library and Archives Canada. Census of Canada 1901. Brandon City, Brandon, Manitoba, Page#2; Family No.19; Marriage details for Clement Miller. Groom's Father - John C Miller, Saloon/Hotel Keeper, born Hannover, Germany, circa 1836; Mother - Henrietta E. Vogel, born Saxony, Germany, circa 1838. Bride's Father - Manning Beckwith, Mother -Abbie J Wade. Bride's Marital Status –Widowed; 1910 Census.
- 36 Beckwith, *In the Swim*, no page numbers.
- 37 *Wheeling Register*, July 29, 1893; *Auburn Bulletin* July/August 1893, 6; *Lewiston Evening Journal*, July 31, 1893, 2.
- 38 Beckwith, *In the Swim*, no page numbers.
- 39 Census 1870 and 1880; *Boston Daily Globe*, July 28, 1889, 10; *New York Clipper*, April 6, 1880/1890, 56.
- 40 *Saint Paul Daily Globe*, June 11, 1893, 12; June 25, 1893, 13; July 2, 1893, 8; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 1, 1894, 25-26; April 8, 1894, 26; July 15, 1894, 27; September 3, 1894, 6.
- 41 *San Francisco Call*, April 5, 1895, 13; April 6, 1895, 14; April 7, 1895, 14; April 16, 1895, 8; April 21, 1895, 22.
- 42 *New York Clipper*, May 19, 1920, 15; *New York Clipper*, May 18, 1895, 173; Rives, 'Beulah Meyer gets a kick out of life'.
- 43 *New York Clipper*, May 23, 1895/6, 194; September 28, 1895, 469; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 23, 1896, 3; *Boston Daily Globe*, November 28, 1897, 30; *New York Clipper*, May 1, 1898, 136; September 11, 1898, 456; November 27, 1898, 645.
- 44 John M. Olinsky et al. *The Illustrated History of Fairmount Park*, www.oldfairmountpark.com/; *Kansas City Journal*, June 16, 1899, 10; June 19, 1899; June 23, 1899, 10; June 20, 1899,11; June 25, 1899, 17; June 28, 1899, 5; July 2, 1899, 16.
- 45 *Sandusky Star*, July 13, 1899; July 14, 1899; *Star*, July 17, 1899; July 21, 1899.
- 46 *Buffalo Express*, August 9, 1901; September 22, 1901; *Syracuse Journal*, July 20, 1901, 3.
- 47 Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo in the State of New York from May 1 to November 1, 1901
<http://panam1901.org/documents/panamwomen/corabeckwith.htm>; *Daily Public Ledger*, June 15, 1904, 2.
- 48 *Police Gazette*, June 25, 1904, 2; *Elyria Chronicle*, July 20, 1904; July 21, 1904; *Elyria Reporter* July 27, 1904.
- 49 *Perrysburg Journal*, August 1, 1902; *Times Democrat*, August 2, 1902; *Ohio Democrat*, April 23, 1903; *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, November 2, 1903; *Morning Star*, February 5, 1904, 4; February 8, 1904, 5; *Daily Public Ledger*, June 15, 1904, 2.
- 50 *New York Clipper*, June 8, 1901, 319; *Manitoba Free Press*, January 6, 1917, 14.

51 Death Certificate Index - Dubuque County (1917-1926) Page 142. Rosenthal, Cora Beckwith Born 16 Sept. 1870 Maine Died 09 Feb. 1924 Dubuque Mother's Maiden Name - Tyler 031-1461 D2158.

52 *Chicago Daily Tribune* Apr 1, 1894 pp. 25-26; April 8, 1894, 26; July 15, 1894, 27; September 3, 1894, 6; *San Francisco Call* 5 April 1895, 13; 6 April 1895, 14; 7 April 1895, 14; 16 April 1895, 8; 21 April 1895, 22; *Omaha Daily Bee*, 9 August 1899, 2; 13 August 1899, 8; 18 August 1899, 2; 19 August 1899, 5; Olinsky, *The Illustrated History of Fairmount Park*.

53 *The Denver Sunday Post*, July 15, 1900, p.12; *Sandusky Star* Ohio 14 July 1899; *Syracuse Journal*, 20 July 1901, 3; *Daily Public Ledger*, 15 June 1904, 2; *Evening Telegram*, 16 August 1906, 4.

54 *Omaha Daily Bee*, August 9, 1899, 2; August 13, 1899, 8; August 18, 1899, 2; August 19, 1899, 5.

55 Rives, 'Beulah Meyer gets a kick out of life'; *Chicago Daily Tribune* April 1, 1894, 25-26; April 8, 1894, 26; July 15, 1894, 27; September 3, 1894, 6; *San Francisco Call*, April 5, 1895, 13; April 6, 1895, 14; April 7, 1895, 14; April 16, 1895, 8; April 21, 1895, 22; Olinsky, *The Illustrated History of Fairmount Park*; *Sandusky Star*, July 14, 1899; *Ohio Democrat*, April 23, 1903; *Omaha Daily Bee*, August 9, 1899, 2; August 13, 1899, 8; August 18, 1899, 2; August 19, 1899, 5; *St. Paul Globe*, July 21, 1901, 4; *Minneapolis Journal*, July 20, 1901, 3; *Daily News*, July 20, 1901; *Syracuse Journal*, July 20, 1901, 3.

56 *Daily Public Ledger*, 15 June 1904, 2; *San Francisco Call*, April 6, 1895, 14; *Buffalo Express*, July 12, 1901; August 9, 1901.

57 *Minneapolis Journal*, 20 July 1901, 3; *Daily News* 20 July 1901; *Syracuse Journal*, 20 July 1901, 3.

58 *Daily Express*, 16 August 1901, 5; *Singapore Free Press and Merchantile Advertiser*, 10 September 1901, 3; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 September 1901, 4.

59 *St. Paul Globe*, July 21, 1901, 4; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 5, 1901, 6; *The Times* (Richmond VA), August 7, 1901, 5; *The Sun*, August 19, 1901.

60 *Buffalo Express*, July 31, 1902; *Ohio Democrat*, April 30, 1903; *Washington Times*, August 26, 1904, 5; *Telegram*, August 26, 1904, 11.

61 *Niagara Falls Gazette*, August 26, 1904; *Urbana Daily Courier*, August 28, 1912, 4; *Manitoba Free Press*, January 6, 1917, 14.

62 *Boston Herald*, September 11, 1889, 3/8?

63 John Bale, 'Ernst Jokl and Layers of Truth', in *Sporting Lives*, ed. Dave Day (Manchester: MMU IPR Publication, 2011), 1-15.

64 Beckwith, *In the Swim*, no page numbers provided; *Wheeling Register*, July 29, 1893; *Auburn Bulletin* July/August, 1893, 6; *Lewiston Evening Journal*, July 31, 1893, 2.

65 *Quincy Daily Journal*, May 23, 1907, 1; *New York Clipper*, September 21, 1912; May 23, 1895/6, 194; *San Francisco Call*, April 5, 1895, 13; April 6, 1895, 14; April 7, 1895, 14; April 16, 1895, 8; April 21, 1895, 22.

66 *Kansas City Journal*, June 16, 1899, 10; June 19, 1899; June 23, 1899, 10; June 20, 1899, 11; June 25, 1899, 17; June 28, 1899, 5; July 2, 1899, 16; *Omaha Daily Bee*, August 9, 1899, 2; August 13, 1899, 8; August 18, 1899, 2; August 19, 1899, 5; *Ohio Democrat*, April 23, 1903; *Police Gazette*, June 25, 1904, 2; *New York Clipper*, April 2, 1906, 270; April 27, 1907, 278; October 21, 1911, 8; *Austin Daily Herald*, September 24, 1907; *Urbana Daily Courier*, August 28, 1912, 4; *Iowa City Citizen*, August 19, 1908, 8.