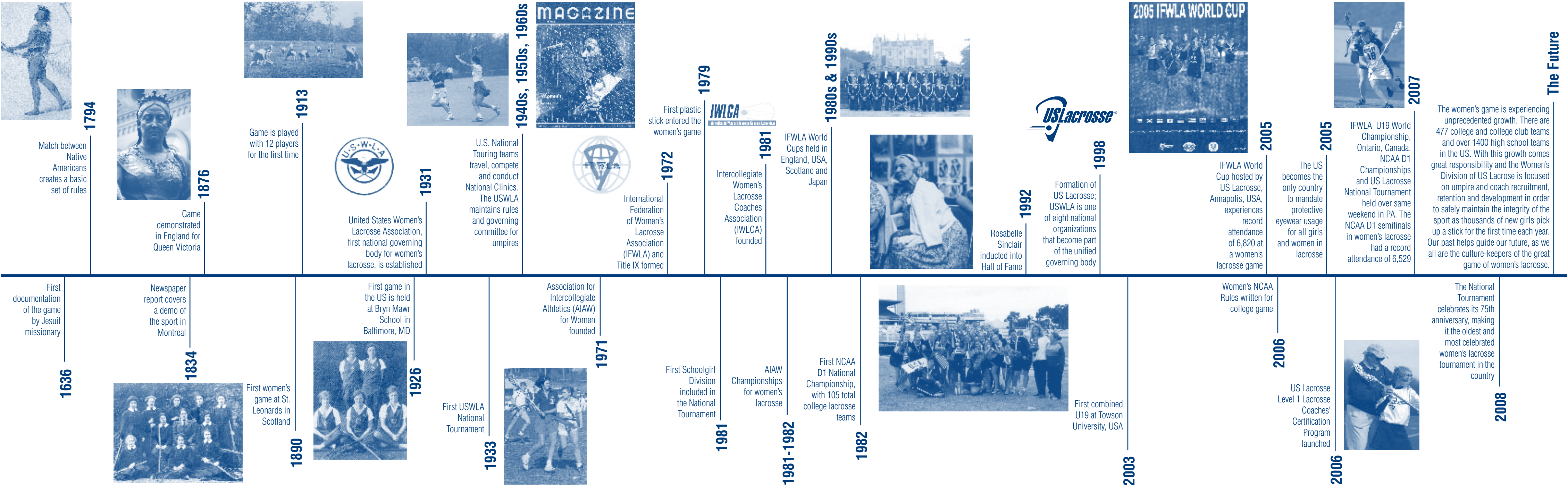




ROOTS OF WOMEN’S LACROSSE

Native Americans had been playing lacrosse for over 100 years before the first women’s game at St. Leonards School in Scotland in 1890. That this game in distant Scotland came directly from Canada is confirmed through a letter sent from New Hampshire by Louisa Lumsden, the school’s first headmistress, in 1884 to her successor, Miss Frances Dove, in which she describes a visit to Montreal where she saw “a beautiful and graceful game” played by the Canghuwaya Indians against a Montreal club team. The record also shows that in 1876 in England, Queen Victoria herself saw a demonstration between Canadian and Iroquois teams. Rumor has it that the Queen reacted enthusiastically. That’s how a North American game rooted in the Great Lakes, took wing, crossed the Atlantic and became a whole new ball game.

The hour-long game among schoolgirls at St. Leonards featured teams of eight, eventually increasing to 12 players to a team in 1913. How the “line” attack and defense positions got their names (point, cover point, third man, third home, second home, first home) is still a mystery. From the early games in Scotland, lacrosse traveled to other parts of England, Ireland and Wales, finally crossing back to America to the Bryn Mawr School in Baltimore with Rosabelle Sinclair, former student at St. Leonards, in 1926.

WOMEN’S LACROSSE COMES TO THE STATES

United States Women’s Lacrosse Association (USWLA) from 1931-1998

From all indications, lacrosse caught on fast along the east coast, and quickly led to the formation of the United States Women’s Lacrosse Association (USWLA), the first national governing body for women’s lacrosse in the US. Run by a group of extremely dedicated volunteers—most of whom were also players, coaches and umpires—the USWLA provided support for the game by writing a single set of playing rules for all levels of the game, as well as training, testing and accrediting umpires, holding annual meetings of the membership and supporting tournaments and teams. Guided by visionary leaders like Joyce Cran Barry, the USWLA sponsored the first National Tournament in Connecticut in 1933 where teams from Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York competed. During the ‘40s and ‘50s, the USWLA began fielding national teams. Matches between England and the US were particularly competitive, though it was not until 1975 that a US team beat England on their turf and came home with an undefeated record that is still celebrated today. The oldest and most popular tradition over the years is the National Tournament, which has been bringing together regional teams from all over the US for over 70 years. The USWLA delivered a strong set of “firsts” for the women’s game:

- first local and national governance structure, with national representation
- first set of standardized rules
- first National Tournament
- first National Umpiring Committee
- first training, testing and accreditation for umpires
- first awards for sportsmanship and service
- first National Team program

As the women’s game grew, the sport as a whole outgrew its original organizational foundation. The USWLA joined with eight other lacrosse associations to create what is now the unified governing body of the sport, US Lacrosse, in 1998, but the USWLA still stands as one of the most successful stories in women’s sports.



FORMATION OF US LACROSSE

US Lacrosse, the governing body for men’s, women’s and youth lacrosse, was founded on January 1, 1998 as a result of a three-year strategic initiative to unify the sport’s many different representative organizations. By combining human and financial resources to provide staff support and a national headquarters, US Lacrosse has successfully managed to maximize the talents and contributions of hundreds of volunteers to grow and develop the sport. The result is an organization which combines the contributions and talents of individuals formerly involved with a number of independent national constituencies.

US Lacrosse provides a leadership role in virtually every aspect of the game throughout the United States, and offers a number of programs and information services to its national membership and more than one million lacrosse enthusiasts throughout the country.

The US Lacrosse national headquarters is located in Baltimore, Maryland and features a three-story administrative center, as well as the sport’s national archives, the Lacrosse Museum and National Hall of Fame.

ABOUT THE WOMEN’S DIVISION OF US LACROSSE

The Women’s Division of US Lacrosse maintains its vision for the game by adhering to these four guiding principles:

- HONOR THE PAST: honor the origins of the game
- COMMITMENT TO CORE VALUES: commitment to the core values of the game’s culture
- MAINTAIN RELEVANCE: understand where the game is today and responsibly develop a dynamic relationship with its future
- RESPECT ALL PARTICIPANTS: value our participants as shareholders

The Women’s Division created the Women’s Game Information and Vision (GIV) Committee, charged with finding effective ways to connect with all the constituencies which support the women’s game and monitor how the game is evolving. The committee’s findings will serve as a guide and pathway for Women’s Division decisions and actions going forward.

WOMEN’S GAME AWARDS & RECOGNITION

As the present is linked to the future, tracking the past to preserve and celebrate memorable people and milestones assumes a strategic as well as an emotional importance.

Individual Player Awards

- The US Lacrosse All-American and Academic All-American Awards honors players who exhibit superior skills and techniques and possess exceptional game sense and knowledge of the game of lacrosse. This player should also embody good sportsmanship.
- The Aimee Willard Award was created to recognize the collegiate athlete participating in the National Tournament. Established by her mother, her coach and the Philadelphia Women’s Lacrosse Association, this award is given to honor the memory of how this young athlete lived.
- The Beth Stone Award was created to recognize the top player in the High School Senior-only Division of the National Tournament.
- The Beth Allen Award is given annually to a member of the US Lacrosse Women’s Division who participates in the Division A at the National Tournament. The recipient of this award shall be a “highly skilled, creative and disciplined player who consistently makes a positive contribution to the team effort.”
- The Heather Leigh Albert National Schoolgirl Award was created to recognize the most outstanding schoolgirl lacrosse player in spirit as well as athletic ability, the recipient will be named at the conclusion of the Girls Division Championship game at the National Tournament. This award was established by the family, friends and coaches of Heather Leigh Albert to honor her memory.

Team Awards

- The President’s Cup honors the winning teams from each of the four pools of the Club Division at the National Tournament. The award dates back to 1975.
- The Valerie Walchak Trophy is presented to the Girls Championship team at the National Tournament. Created by the USWLA Executive Board, this award is named for Valerie Walchak in recognition of her contribution to the development of schoolgirl lacrosse in the United States.

Service Awards

- The Nancy Chance Service Award was established to acknowledge significant service to women’s lacrosse by an amateur member. The recipient is selected from nominations submitted by May 1 of each year to a committee composed of US Lacrosse Women’s Division officers. The inaugural Nancy Chance Award was presented posthumously to Jane Vache, player, first U.S. Squad coach and active officer from 1957-1960.
- The US Lacrosse Women’s Division Officials Council Distinguished National Service Award honors exceptional service toward the professional development and standards of women’s umpires at all levels.
- The US Lacrosse Women’s Division Officials Council National Emeritus Award honors a long-standing umpire who has given exemplary service to women’s umpires.

To learn more about women’s lacrosse go to www.uslacrosse.org. To get involved with the Women’s Game Information and Vision Committee or to receive additional posters, email womensdivision@uslacrosse.org.

