

Newcomb Art Gallery explores visual history of Tulane sports

August 08, 2013 9:00 AM Teresa Parker Farris
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A new exhibit opening on Tuesday (Aug. 13) at the [Newcomb Art Gallery](#) explores the history of athletics programs at Tulane University and Newcomb College, displaying images of turn-of-the-century Newcomb students playing basquette ball along with blueprints and original architectural ornamentation from historic Tulane Stadium.



A 1909 photograph shows basquette ball practice outdoors at the Newcomb College campus on Washington Avenue. (Vertical files, Newcomb Athletics, University Archives, Tulane University)

“More Than a Game: Sports and Identity at Newcomb and Tulane” explores the culture and history of the schools' athletics programs and their influence on students and community members alike. The show runs through Sept. 15 with a tailgating-inspired [reception](#) on Thursday, Sept. 5, featuring the Tulane mascot Riptide, cheerleaders and the Tulane University Marching Band.

“As early as the late 1800s, Tulane and Newcomb displayed progressive attitudes toward the importance of athleticism,” gallery and exhibition curator Sally Main says. “School administrators saw that sports not only promoted student health but also encouraged social change and civic pride.”

More than a century ago, for example, Newcomb became the South's first institution of higher learning to introduce a teacher's certificate in physical education and to offer a four-year degree program in the same field.

Pioneering physical education instructor Clara Gregory Baer, who taught at Newcomb from 1891 to 1929, was the first to publish rules for women's basketball or "basquette" ball as it was then called, and also invented Newcomb ball, a game similar to volleyball, that is still popular at New England summer camps.

Early 20th-century Newcomb women also received training as gymnasts, [archers](#), swimmers and marksmen. In doing so, they challenged 19th-century conventions regarding women.

The significance of sports went beyond campus, however, to help shape the identity of New Orleans. With the inauguration of the Sugar Bowl in 1935, Tulane Stadium ? built through a 25-year partnership between the university and city ? became the premiere venue for collegiate football.

Objects in the show come from the Tulane Special Collections, the Newcomb Archives, local residents and The Historic New Orleans Collection.

Teresa Parker Farris is marketing coordinator for the Newcomb Art Gallery.