

# ~~ The Sonnenberg Playground ~~

Mark Clark Thompson was not your typical demure Victorian woman. Yes, she was well versed in the popular components of how a traditional Victorian woman should be a supportive wife, run a household, observe all social graces etcetera... Yet she had a dynamic personality all her own. For instance, Mary took a particular interest in physical fitness for both the male and female genders of the day. To her, a healthy and fit body contributed to a healthy and fit mind.

In 1902, Mark Clark Thompson put forth a plan to develop the Sonnenberg Playground. It was located on Howell St. and covered about 10 acres of land. She purchased the land as well as purchased all the equipment for this fresh air gymnasium including swings, trapezes, rings, etc. There were fully equipped tennis courts, a running track, and picnic grounds. She hired trained instructors to teach games, dance, and songs from countries around the world. Soon after the grounds were finished and opened, 10 incandescent lamps and two arc lights were installed so the grounds would be lit from 8pm to 10pm every night.

Last but not least, a baseball diamond was installed complete with a concrete bandstand! Underneath the grandstand were dressing rooms, lockers, and baths. She provided funds to organize and uniform a baseball team and the funds for transportation to surrounding communities for the Sonnenberg team. Not only that, she also supposed the transportation for visiting baseball teams to come play in Canandaigua. Equipment and playground apparatus was updated and replaced annually. Mary hired and paid the salary for any needed instructors.

The "Sonnenberg Playground Metal" was awarded to children who excelled in athletics each year at the playground. Mrs. Thompson also commissioned the famous Tiffany Jewelers to design a gold medal that was to be awarded to any young athlete who won the same events three years in a row at the playground.

Mrs. Thompson was often seen strolling through the playground and observing the participants of all ages engaged in the many activities there. In her will, she bequeathed the playground to the community with funds for its maintenance and upkeep.





Sonnenberg Playground 1904