

# Women's History Month Spotlight

## *Did You Know?*

### **Mary Elizabeth "Lizzie" Murphy (1894 - 1964)**

In the early 20th century, when baseball was predominantly a male sport, Mary Elizabeth "Lizzie" Murphy shattered gender barriers and earned the title "Queen of Baseball." Her journey from a mill worker in Rhode Island to a female baseball player is a testament to her talent and determination.

Born on April 13, 1894, in Warren, Rhode Island, Lizzie Murphy was the fourth of seven children to John E. Murphy, a mill hand and semi-professional baseball player, and Mary Murphy. From a young age, Lizzie exhibited remarkable athleticism, excelling in running, skating, swimming, and most notably, baseball. By 12 years old, she left school to work as a ring spinner at the Parker Woolen Mill, yet remained passionate about baseball. She spent her spare time playing with local teams like the Warren Silk Hats and the Warren Baseball Club. By 15, she was competing in men's amateur leagues.

Murphy's professional career began when she turned 17 years old. She signed with the Providence Independents and later was invited to join a traveling all-star team based in Boston, Massachusetts. This team toured across New England and Canada, playing up to 100 games annually. Murphy also showcased her talents in women's leagues, playing for the Bloomer Girls for three decades, renowned for her pitching and batting prowess.

Murphy was also a savvy self-promoter. Between innings, she sold photos of herself and adopted the moniker "Queen of Baseball," though fans also affectionately called her "Spike Murphy." Her skills garnered media attention, leading to headlines like "Lizzie Murphy in Game" and "Spike' Murphy, Woman Baseball Wizard, Learned Game Throwing Stones—'Ty' and 'Babe' Better Beware if 'Liz' Breaks Into Game."

In 1922, Murphy became the first woman to play against major league players. During a charity exhibition at Fenway Park, an all-star team from the New England and American Leagues faced the Boston Red Sox. Murphy entered the game in the fourth inning, playing first base, and recorded an out from a throw by a third baseman. Murphy also played in a National League All-Star game against the Boston Braves, and she played in a Negro League game against Satchel Paige. Additionally, Murphy played first base for the Negro League team, the Cleveland Giants while they toured Rhode Island. Murphy became the first person, regardless of gender, to play for both American and National League All-Star teams.

After retiring from baseball, Murphy settled in Rhode Island until her passing on July 27, 1964, at the age of 70. Her contributions to baseball have since been recognized as she was posthumously inducted into the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame in 1994, cementing her legacy as a

trailblazer in sports, inspiring generations of female athletes to pursue their aspirations in spaces traditionally dominated by men.

*Sources:*

Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame. N.d. "Mary Elizabeth 'Lizzie' Murphy. Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame. Retrieved March 1, 2025 (<https://riheritagehalloffame.com/elizabeth-murphy/>).

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***Women's History is American History!***

A spotlight will be published every other week. Dr. Julian Culver ([julian\\_culver@brown.edu](mailto:julian_culver@brown.edu)) wrote the above spotlight. Have a spotlight to share? Newsletter submissions are due to Casey Wahl ([casey\\_wahl@brown.edu](mailto:casey_wahl@brown.edu)) Wednesdays by 11:00 am.