

Claire Galligan

- started swimming competitively with the Women's Lifesaving League and became a charter member of the New York Women's Swimming Association when that celebrated club was formed in 1916. At a time when Victorian morality dictated that a woman's place was in the home, when physicians warned of the harmful effects of strenuous physical activity on frail womankind and moralists were appalled by women daring to wear revealing bathing suits in public - Claire Galligan was a rebel and the most celebrated American woman swimmer of her day. She won the first recognized AAU National Championship, winning the 500 yard freestyle on March 31, 1916, in New York City and on September 31, 1917 became the first American woman to set a recognized world record of 7:31.4 in the 500 at Neptune Park in Alameda, California. Claire was America's first but never got to swim in the Olympics. The 1916 Games were cancelled by war and by 1920 she was married and had retired from swimming.



Claire Galligan - Hands and Foot-prints in cement during her induction to the Hall of Fame in 1970

To A Lady Swimmer

*William F. Kirk 1917,
NY Journal*

*Miss Galligan, Miss Galligan
The champion of the all,
The girl who knows each swimming pose
From trudgeon stroke to crawl,
How does it seem to go full steam,
Where weaker craft would founder,
Swift as a salmon up a stream,
And swifter than a flounder?*

*Miss Galligan, perhaps you know
That in the days of Nero,
Leander swam twelve miles or so
To meet a dame named Hero.
This heroine was a little goose
To wait for such a gander;
I'll bet my thumb that you'd have swum
Half-way to meet Leander.*

*Miss Galligan, Miss Galligan
When through the waves you churn,
You often vex the sterner sex
And leave them far astern.
O mermaid bold, long may you hold
The wreath you've won by swimmin'
And spoil for gents their arguments
Regarding Votes for Wimmen*