

MARY MACFADDEN AND THE MEDIA NARRATIVE OF THE PHYSICAL CULTURE FAMILY

BY LUCY BOUCHER & JAN TODD

"I Married a Health Fiend," read the lurid headline of a British newspaper on 23 October 1955. The story was not a quasi-fictional confessional piece published in one of physical culturist Bernarr Macfadden's various tabloid magazines, but, rather, the shocking tale of how his former wife, Mary Macfadden, claimed after their 34 years of marriage ended in divorce court, that the self-proclaimed "father of physical culture" "humiliated me, starved me, even swindled me."¹

Bernarr Macfadden was once a neglected figure in the field of physical culture studies. Following Jan Todd's 1986 essay on Macfadden as a key proponent of women's exercise, however, other scholars also began examining the muscular millionaire's cultural impact and lasting significance.² In the late 1980s, Robert Ernst and William R. Hunt provided detailed biographical insights into Macfadden's life. More recently, scholars such as Shannon L. Walsh have investigated the eugenic implications of Macfadden's *Physical Culture* magazine, while media scholar Kathleen L. Endres has examined *Physical Culture* magazine as a form of female empowerment.³ A neglected area of scholarly enquiry, however, has been Mary Macfadden and her children who came to be known as the "physical culture family."

This paper aims to present the physical

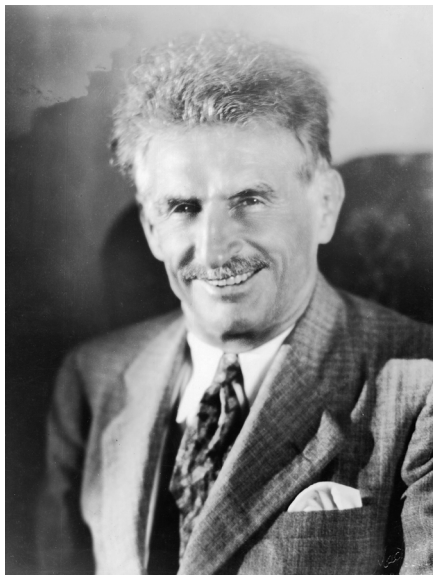
culture family as a calculated media strategy that served two key purposes. The first was the rehabilitation of Macfadden's public image in the wake of several obscenity trials, which saw

him accused of publishing indecent materials. Publicizing the physical culture family allowed him to reinvent himself as a domestic authority, cloaking his less reputable views on sex education and nudity in a veneer of respectability. While Macfadden had gathered many followers in mainstream America by the mid-teens, a larger number of Americans still viewed him as a "crackpot" and morally suspect. Marrying Mary Williamson, a wholesome athletic Yorkshire lass in 1913 and raising a family of strong, healthy children, helped to establish Macfadden's credibility in both the realm of physical culture and on the global stage as he set his ambitions towards political life. Mary Macfadden later claimed that

Bernarr viewed his family as just another way to "exemplify my teachings and my beliefs."⁴

COMSTOCK AND FLIGHT TO ENGLAND

The 1909 obscenity trial that eventually saw Macfadden flee to the United Kingdom was not the first time that the "father of physical culture" had run afoul of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. Anthony Comstock was a puritanical despot who had dedicated his life to seeking out and quashing anything he considered indecent. He was appointed as the first secretary for the Society for the Sup-



Bernarr Macfadden in an undated publicity still. This flattering photo may have been taken at the height of his campaign to rebrand himself as a father figure and family man.

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pression of Vice in 1873 and served as a Special Agent for the United States Postal Office Department. Both positions gave him enormous power over Macfadden who preached ideas on sex education and the human body that jarred with Victorian sensibilities. Though the two men were diametrically opposed in their views, they shared a monomaniacal drive in their separate crusades. Macfadden was determined to end “prudery” and encouraged families to speak openly of sexual health. It was not, however, until 1905 that the two men’s paths crossed.

In October, Macfadden was preparing to stage a follow-up to his 1903 Physical Culture Exhibition in Madison Square Gardens.⁵ The event was intended to promote both physical culture and Macfadden’s magazine and featured a posing competition for men and women. Comstock’s attention was drawn by the “obscene posters of women attired in tight-fitting, sash-waisted underclothing” plastered around the city.⁶ Macfadden, no stranger to using sexual titillation as a sales tactic, had not reckoned on the ire of the censors. Days before the contest, Comstock and his squad stormed the *Physical Culture* offices and arrested Macfadden, seizing five hundred pounds of “obscene” material (posters for the show) in the process. Macfadden posted the \$1000 bail, and the show went on. The event and the furor surrounding

it were reported in salacious detail by the *New York Times*. While this had the positive effect of attracting a crowd of 20,000 desperate to see for themselves if the women were obscene, it also damaged the credibility of Macfadden and his physical culture ideas. On 28 March 1906 the courts found Macfadden “technically” guilty of obscenity, but the sentence was suspended, much to the dismay of Comstock, who stood up in court to protest.⁷

This was not the only legal problem Macfadden faced in 1906. A case was also brought against Macfadden by a former employee, Frank Leonard, who demanded a refund of the fees he and his wife, Anna, had paid for a course at Macfadden’s Physical Culture Institute in Spotswood, New Jersey. A dispute between Macfadden and Mr. and Mrs. Leonard caused them to leave early, and they demanded a refund. The jury gave Leonard a verdict of \$17.60 and costs, but Macfadden appealed the decision. When the case was taken up again in October 1906, the court could not proceed because “Mr. Macfadden was in Europe.”⁸ English newspapers reveal that Macfadden had begun a lecture tour in Britain dating from April 1906.⁹

Beyond the constant legal disputes in which Macfadden found himself embroiled, the press were continually printing lascivious reports of his utopian experiment, Physi-



Macfadden’s utopian experiment, Physical Culture City, had the Bernarr Macfadden Institute (left) and the Physical Culture Publishing Company, along with a Physical Culture restaurant, a train station, a large building called a health home to house 100 patients, and “fresh air” living quarters. All of these facilities were erected and run through the efforts of the community’s citizens.

cal Culture City, describing it as a “City of Few Clothes.”¹⁰ Several residents were even arrested for public indecency for wearing bathing suits outside the borders of the community.¹¹ A newspaper account described the residents in Physical Culture City as dressed in a “sketchy and Aboriginal manner” that caused the Spotswood townsfolk to hide their blushes in their handkerchiefs.¹² Macfadden escaped to England for the first time since his visit in 1897 because of these scandals and another charge related to sending pornography through the mail. For the next decade this established a pattern of trans-Atlantic travel for Macfadden as he took refuge in the more welcoming United Kingdom, where his ideas and reputation had not been so seriously tarnished.

Although Macfadden survived his first encounter with Comstock, his reputation was bruised by it. Undeterred, Macfadden intensified his campaign against the curse of “prudery” upon returning to America in the fall of 1906. One of the core tenets of the physical culturist’s philosophy was that if man lived according to the laws of nature, he would be healthy and moral. Refusing to speak of sexual matters, Macfadden believed, led to ignorance, vice, and venereal diseases, all of which threatened the nation’s health. Sexual education, not suppression, was the answer. It was with this in mind that Macfadden commissioned John R. Coryell to write the novel *Wild Oats: or Growing to Manhood in Civilized Society*, which was serialized in *Physical Culture* magazine in 1906. The novel dealt with the taint of venereal disease brought about by a young man’s ignorance of sexual matters and was intended to be educational. The censors disagreed, and Macfadden was arrested on the property of Physical Culture City in February 1907, and charged with mailing objectionable literature. Macfadden was charged with the same offense in Canada, again damaging both his reputation and his business.¹³

Macfadden contested his innocence in the courts and in public, even organizing a Sterling Purity League to rehabilitate his image but he was eventually indicted by a Federal Grand Jury in New Jersey in November 1907, fined \$2000, and sentenced to two years hard labor.¹⁴ Macfadden continued to fight his case, but the protracted legal battles and the blow to his business caused by his inability to circulate his magazine through the U.S. postal system led the physical culturist to the brink of ruin.

In August 1912, Macfadden divested himself of all stock in the Macfadden Publish-

ing Company and announced he was stepping down as editor of *Physical Culture* with the intent of “getting into a sphere where I can wield greater influence.”¹⁵ In the article he made no mention of his intention to leave for England, instead embarking upon a lecture tour across the United States. The inciting incident that led Macfadden to abandon his home country seems to have been his arrest before giving a lecture in Washington on 12 June 1912. He told reporters after he posted bail that, “I am better known in England . . . and have always received better treatment there than here.”¹⁶ In September Macfadden sailed for Europe, leaving his problems and his publishing concerns in the hands of the company’s treasurer, Charles Desgrey, with the tacit agreement that he would regain control of the company once the scandal died down.

Macfadden later described his decision to move to England in 1912 as a “prolonged vacation,” but Macfadden already had business interests in Britain and he did not stay idle for long after arriving.¹⁷ Welsh boxer Freddie Welsh, a vegetarian and follower of Macfadden’s teachings, also returned to Britain in 1912, and used Macfadden’s Health Home in Chesham, Bucks, as his training camp. Macfadden had opened the resort at some point before 1908 and Welsh gave it publicity whenever he was interviewed prior to the three fights he fought in England that year.¹⁸ Macfadden published a U.K. edition of his *Physical Culture* magazine, and another called *Woman’s Health and Beauty*. In the summer of 1903, he claimed that the circulation of his British publications was almost 70,000 a month, “what no other American publisher has ever successfully accomplished.”¹⁹ It was within the pages of his women’s magazine that Macfadden began orchestrating his campaign to rehabilitate his public image and return to America as a respectable family man.

GREAT BRITAIN’S PERFECT WOMAN

The search for Great Britain’s Perfect Woman launched in either December 1912 or January 1913, in the pages of Macfadden’s British *Woman’s Health and Beauty* magazine. Macfadden’s future wife, 19-year-old Mary Williamson, was urged to enter by her beau who was convinced that the beautiful champion swimmer would win the £100 prize.²⁰

Whether Macfadden planned the contest as an elaborate marriage plot is unclear. One of Mary’s confidantes later told the FBI, who kept a substantial file on Macfadden and

his activities, that “some man had put an ad. in the paper for a wife and she should be a good swimmer.”²¹ In a 1929 article, Fulton Oursler, Macfadden’s biographer and publicist, framed Macfadden’s marriage to Great Britain’s Perfect Woman as “a wholly unexpected surprise.”²² Whatever the truth of Mary and Macfadden’s first encounter, the contest essentially became a glorified personal advertisement for Macfadden who was desperate to rehabilitate his tarnished image.

Macfadden had two failed marriages already behind him by the time he settled in England. Viewed through the lens of history, it appears that Macfadden planned to find a third wife young enough to be pliable to his ideas, whom he could shape into an ideal—the perfect example of “physical culture womanhood.” The winner of the 1913 competition would not disappoint him as his other wives had. She was “The Perfect Woman” and would be presented as the ideal wife and mother of his forthcoming physical culture family.

Mary Williamson was born on 13 July 1892 in Keighley, Yorkshire.²³ Her early life, described both in her memoir and by Macfadden’s journalists, is yet another example of the “exercise saved me” trope—a tale told by nearly all physical culture entrepreneurs. Mary’s version began with her report that she suffered from various childhood illnesses but determined to build her body “from the puny frame I was born with” to possess the “treasures of motherhood.”²⁴ In her autobiography, Mary claimed she led an “athletic life from about eleven years of age,” beginning as a runner, but discovering swimming when she moved to the nearby town of Halifax and found that her new school was equipped with a pool.²⁵ At the age of 13, after having only practiced 12 times, she reportedly became both the Schoolgirls’ Champion and the Ladies’ Champion of Halifax. By the age of 15 she had won 20 prizes and was the youngest girl to win the Award of Merit from the Royal Life Saving Society after rescuing a drowning child. She reportedly went on to accumulate 60 medals and trophies by the time she was 19 and had taken part in an annual 15-mile swim in the Thames, twice, which she completed in only four hours and twenty minutes on her second attempt.²⁶ Whether Mary believed during her teenage years that she was swimming to become a “perfect woman” or a “champion mother” is unknown and probably unlikely. However, when the opportunity came to capitalize on the body that swimming created, she did not shy away

from the challenge.

To become Great Britain’s Perfect Woman, Mary Williamson was required to submit her measurements and a photograph of herself in flesh-colored tights to a judging panel which included Macfadden himself.²⁷ Mary reportedly sent in a photo of herself in a more modest, four-ounce bathing suit, “complying with the legal proprieties of the time.”²⁸ If this first act of disobedience portended ill for their future physical culture marriage, Macfadden determined not to heed it. He liked her photograph enough to send Dr. Horace G. Church, the manager of



Mary Williamson, born in 1892, was a champion swimmer who won a “contest” to find Britain’s Perfect Woman in 1913. After being named the champion, Williamson was taken on a tour across Britain, appearing alongside 45-year-old Bernarr Macfadden and spreading the gospel of physical culture. They married on 5 March 1913.

the Bernarr Macfadden Health Home in Chesham, to inspect Mary.²⁹ Passing Dr. Church's inspection, Mary travelled to London in January 1913 and began working in the Macfadden offices. Her first job was to teach gymnastics to a young girl who would accompany Macfadden on the lecture tour planned to display the winner of his perfect woman contest.

On 19 February 1913, Mary was chosen as "Great Britain's Perfect Woman" over six other competitors, but her close involvement with Macfadden before the contest made the "judging" a mere formality. Two weeks after the contest, Mary and Macfadden began a four-and-a-half-month tour of the British Isles, spreading the gospel of physical culture.³⁰ During the tour, Macfadden took Mary on a 20-mile hike and asked her to be his wife. The proposal was more pragmatic than romantic. In her memoir, Mary claims that she had been asking about her prize money when the 45-year-old Macfadden told the 19-year-old that he had almost given up on the hope of "raising a perfect physical culture family." Mary, who had always wanted a large family, was the perfect wife to fulfill his "great purpose."³¹

The pair married on 5 March 1913, but there was no public announcement. Mary believed that Macfadden wanted to keep the marriage a secret until after the tour for fear that it would detract from ticket sales. Postal cards of Mary posing in her union suit and sash were sent for sale to towns ahead of their lectures, in hopes of luring in a male audience.³² Positioning his wife as a sexual object may have run counterintuitive to Macfadden's plans to use Mary's wholesome, "Yorkshire lass" image to boost his own tarnished credibility, but if it increased ticket sales, it is almost certain Macfadden would have chosen the most lucrative option. He had condemned patent medicines for years, for example, yet readily advertised them in the pages of his magazines.



This image of Mary holding her first child, baby daughter Byrnece, appeared in the April 1915 issue of *Physical Culture*.

THE PHYSICAL CULTURE FAMILY: PUBLIC IMAGE VERSUS PRIVATE PROBLEMS

Whether the union was based on love or purely a business transaction for Macfadden is difficult to tell. According to Mary, he was open about his intentions behind the physical culture family and his reasons for choosing her as his wife. Mary reports that when the couple planned to return to America in 1914, Macfadden told her, "I must build up my reputation. We must have a physical culture family and you and the children must exemplify my teachings and my beliefs and my ideas, and with that I can build up the esteem of the public."³³ Mary's testimony was bolstered by

Macfadden's former business manager Charles Desgrey's claim that "Mrs. Macfadden and he were going to reorganize the business . . . play up the physical culture family, the sanctity of the home" and raise a large family to "wipe out the stigma of—as he called it—the unfair persecution to which he had been subjected while in America."³⁴ While damning, it should be noted that these assertions were made during an acrimonious divorce battle and that Desgrey also felt slighted by Macfadden.

The first physical culture child, Byrnece, was born on 26 December 1913. Mary was placed under a strict vegetarian diet during her pregnancy and followed an exacting regime of 200 knee-bends a day and long walks. Macfadden even persuaded a five-and-a-half months pregnant Mary to leap 60 feet from the Long West Pier in Brighton into the Channel before a cheering crowd. The stunt was intended to prove that pregnant women were capable of vigorous exercise and did not need to confine themselves to bed rest. It also drummed up publicity for the health home the pair established in Brighton, allowing Macfadden to attract more customers and increase his fees.³⁵

Despite following physical culture principles, Mary suffered a traumatic and agonizing



By 1923, when this photograph was taken, the Macfadden family were living in Nyack, New York, in this large two-story home. The house, shown here from the back, was made with screened sleeping porches and a roof-top observation deck. Note the swimming pool in the foreground and the small tent for outdoor camping. Macfadden prized fresh air and outdoor living as part of the pathway to health. The home still stands in Nyack, although it has now been broken into apartments.

birth. She labored for over 47 hours with only midwives to attend her.³⁶ In the hagiographical *Chats with the Macfadden Family*, Grace Perkins claimed that “so natural was the delivery” that five days later Mary happily went out and walked two miles in the snow carrying the

baby.³⁷ After their divorce, Mary reclaimed her own narrative, using her memoir and the media to disavow her husband’s version of their lives. In contrast to Perkins’ idyllic portrait, Mary claimed that when Macfadden forced her out of bed 72 hours after the birth, she felt too weak to



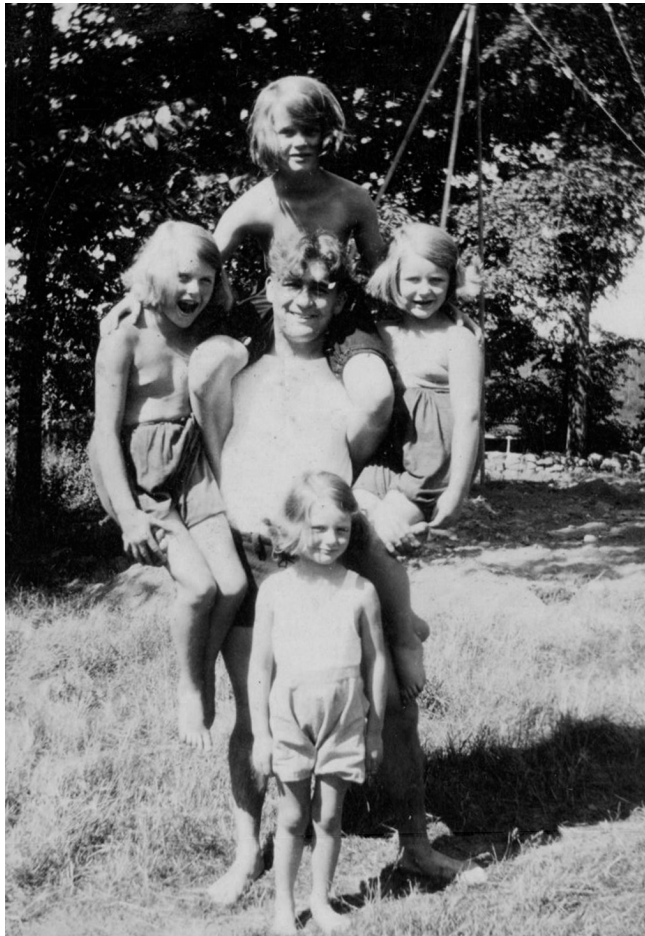
When one has a swimming pool, one must have swimming parties. The Macfaddens often invited staff from the publishing company over for a dip in the pool. This photograph was taken on 26 August 1923, left to right: Joe Linahan, Alice Williamson, Braunda, Miss Kellog (behind), Helen, Beverly, Byrnece, Mary Macfadden (behind), Beulah, Mrs Elder, Mr. Elder, Jesse Mercer Gehman, Bernarr Macfadden, Mr. Stoul

lift herself up in her chair.³⁸

Mary was also expected to raise Helen Macfadden, the consequence of Macfadden's affair with his secretary, Susie Wood, during his second marriage.³⁹ Helen was successfully integrated into the physical culture family and featured alongside her half-sisters, but Macfadden struggled to navigate the contradictions between his new family man image and his illegitimate child. Mary was told that the new addition to their family was an orphan girl whose mother had died of typhoid in Macfadden's Physical Culture City. The physical culturist had selflessly volunteered to raise the child himself and Mary was impressed by his largesse.⁴⁰ Mary never publicly addressed Helen's illegitimacy, but in later court testimony she described Helen as her husband's "natural child."⁴¹ Macfadden had argued that illegitimate children should not be persecuted for the sins of their parents, yet he



Posed against a black backdrop, Helen and other girls often appeared in exercise pictures for Macfadden's magazines.



Naturopath and *Physical Culture* editor, Jesse Mercer Gehman was a family friend and could often be found at the Macfadden household. The girls found it great fun to spend time with him, and they're shown here helping him demonstrate his strength. From his private collection, Gehman wrote on the back of this 1923 image: "An Armful."

knew that in order to speak with moral authority on domestic matters, he could not admit Helen's dubious birth. He continued to obscure the truth of her parentage throughout her life, simultaneously claiming through biographers such as Perkins that she was a daughter "from a previous marriage," or Mary's biological child.⁴²

While it remains unclear whether Macfadden embarked upon his third marriage with the definite idea of exploiting his wife and future family for commercial and reputational gain, it is certain that by the time Macfadden returned home in 1914, he had determined to use his newly acquired family-man image to re-establish himself as an expert on domestic health. After regaining control of *Physical Culture* magazine in October 1916, Macfadden repositioned the magazine's content to focus on family health, leveraging his new authority as both a scientific expert and a father with lived experience.⁴³ While the magazine had always included articles on child-rearing, Macfadden explicitly declared in the September 1918 editorial that *Physical Culture* was a "home magazine."⁴⁴ His intent to use the veneer of respectability afforded to him by domestic life was not covert. In September 1917 he countered the claims of critics who denigrated him as a "common degenerate" by claiming that he was "a simple, home loving man. My principal delights are found at home with my wife and my kiddies."⁴⁵ He also used his family as examples



Macfadden didn't call them his family—they were his “Physical Culture Family.” This family photo taken in 1923 shows all the children then living, although two of their images have been added in to the photo. Macfadden understood the power of “photo shopping” a picture even before the software had been invented.

of his health claims. His articles combined the language of 25 years of “scientific investigation” with the folksy rhetoric of his experience as a father of “four kiddies” whose “bedroom has been honored by the presence of a baby” for the last five years.⁴⁶

Macfadden's approach to dealing with his children's health was not just rhetorical. Mary claimed her husband plunged their two-day-old baby into a bath of ice water and starved the children for three weeks to cure them of the whooping cough. The children caught the whooping cough, she claimed, from being in the studio to perform on Macfadden's WOR radio show in 1923.⁴⁷

Macfadden's exploitation of his family-man image went beyond using anecdotes about his children to lend credibility to his medical views. While Macfadden may not have deliberately targeted Mary as part of a media campaign, it seems that by the time the couple returned to America, Macfadden had realized the potential of leveraging his newly acquired family-man image to cloak his more disrepu-

table ideas on nudity and sex education and re-establish himself in his home country. Mary claims that the first use of the physical culture family to “build up the esteem of the public” came in an April 1915 article in *Physical Culture* magazine.⁴⁸ The interview with Macfadden on the future of physical culture made no mention of his marriage but featured photos of “Mrs. Bernarr Macfadden” in classical dress and cradling baby Byrnece.⁴⁹

After a miscarriage, which, in Mary's estimation, was brought about by following Macfadden's prescription of vigorous medicine ball exercises, a quick succession of physical culture children followed the birth of Byrnece. Beulah Macfadden was born on 19 April 1915.⁵⁰ Her sister Braunda arrived on 6 October 1916.⁵¹ During this third pregnancy Mary was permitted to eat meat when she felt she needed it and she believed this contributed to Braunda's impressive birth weight of 13 pounds. Macfadden was proud of this hearty specimen of physical culture who learned to walk early, was a strong swimmer, and supposedly could hold her head

erect at birth; therefore, her name reflected her strength.⁵² In a 1922 article, Macfadden featured three photographs of his five-year old daughter, describing her as “a husky representative of the Macfadden method of beauty building.”⁵³ The final Macfaddenette was born on 26 January 1918, and named Beverly, after the road where they were staying at the time.⁵⁴

Disappointed that his physical culture family had produced only girls, Macfadden allowed Mary a break from her consecutive pregnancies. The children, however, were kept busy. Macfadden wasted no time in organizing them into a dance troupe called “The Macfaddenettes.” The children were home-schooled in a strict physical culture curriculum. Mary and the children took dance lessons from many instructors, including Helen Moller, a famous dancer who shared Macfadden’s views on the tyranny of clothes.⁵⁵ Byrnece recalled that the children did “eight hours of exercise a day” on “diets of milk, raw foods, water and honey,” and “whenever the family had company, he would have all the girls perform collectively and individually.”⁵⁶

The girls’ performances were not kept private for long. In the 1920s, Macfadden expanded his media empire into movie production, creating short films with physical culture themes. The reception for the motion picture *Men Women Love!* became the venue for, as

Mary recalled, “Bernarr’s first employment of his physical culture family for publicity purposes.”⁵⁷ The Macfaddenettes entertained the revelers by springing through an oil portrait of their father and dancing in “scanty costumes.”⁵⁸ The family was also featured in the physical culture movie, *Health is the Greatest Wealth*, with Macfadden playing the role of “a desperate physical culturist . . . rushing home to cure his sick wife before soft-headed servants telephoned for the doctors.”⁵⁹

Despite Perkins’ assertion that “occasional photographs” were the only glimpse of Macfadden’s family the public was permitted to see, the physical culture family was—according to Mary’s lawyer—“advertised as Macfadden’s chief asset . . . his reputation was built up . . . founded in that idea of the great Macfadden Physical Culture Family.”⁶⁰ The Macfaddenettes were required to perform at many large public events, such as the 1924 Christmas party in Central Park for Macfadden’s newly established newspaper, *The Graphic*. Mary recalled with horror that the children danced in Grecian tunics, their bare arms and legs exposed to zero-degree temperatures.⁶¹ Perkins, in more laudatory tones, praised the girls’ hardy physical culture constitutions, exclaiming that they danced in “icy winds” and “never caught a cold.”⁶²

The Macfaddenettes were often used

Four of Bernarr Macfadden’s daughters appeared in advertising for Kellogg’s Shredded Krumbles in the late Teens. Americans were informed that Bernarr’s “rosy, hearty youngsters keep well and strong by eating Krumbles.”

as models in their father's magazines; either demonstrating exercises or posing alongside their father as emblems of vital health. Mary claimed that Arthur Leslie, Macfadden's press agent, would circulate photographs of the family to be used by various newspapers and advertisers—running contrary to Perkins' assertion that the family was rarely seen. The Macfadden children were even used to advertise Kellogg's Shredded Krumbles cereal—a competitor to Macfadden's own ill-advised Strengthfude—although Mary swore no one in the family had ever tasted them.⁶³

SEX DETERMINATION AND THE DEATH OF "LITTLE BILLY"

After the birth of his fourth daughter, Macfadden permitted Mary a respite from childbirth for over three years. Accounts vary over who was the most determined to try for a physical culture son. Mary says that Macfadden stopped wanting to try for more children



After the death of his son Billy, Macfadden did not follow the usual norms for mourning and announced one day that the family needed to go on a long walk. All were forced to participate. This photo from Gehman's collection may be related to that time. On the back, he wrote: "The Completion of 400 Miles." He further added that it was 22 November 1923 and taken in Central Park, NY.

after Beverly, but that she believed their marriage could be saved by a son.⁶⁴ Macfadden claimed that Mary refused to have any more children unless they could be certain it would be a boy. Macfadden's interest in siring a son was also rooted in drumming up publicity for his theory of sex determination. Mary reported that her husband often talked of the Emperor of Japan's struggle to conceive a son and how much he might pay for the guarantee of a male heir.⁶⁵ Macfadden himself admitted that such a method would be of "incalculable value" and that parents would "make great sacrifices" to discover this information.⁶⁶

Byron "Billy" Macfadden was born on 29 December 1921. Macfadden published an article in *Physical Culture* magazine publicizing the birth of this "lusty fellow" and trumpeting the success of his theories on sex determination.⁶⁷ The couple's joy at the birth of their first son was short-lived. The apparently healthy child died suddenly at the age of 11 months after suffering a series of convulsions. Macfadden refused to call for the doctor. The death of "Little Billy" caused further ruptures between Bernarr and Mary, who had become skeptical of her husband's child-rearing methods. Aware of the bad publicity the death of a physical culture child would bring, Macfadden spent the days after his son's death scouring the newsstands to ensure the press had not gotten wind of the tragedy.⁶⁸ He was determined to control the narrative surrounding Billy's death, crafting it into a lesson in physical culture, rather than a failure of his own parenting. In February 1923, Macfadden published "The Story of Little Billy" in which he directly blamed his wife for their son's death. He claimed that Mary's overwhelming "mother love" caused her to overfeed her son, weakening his health. Macfadden's only culpability was that his "protest was not vigorous enough."⁶⁹ Fulton Oursler, Macfadden's most ardent yes-man, urged him not to run the editorial, believing "it was a mistake for him to publicly blame Mrs. Macfadden."⁷⁰ Macfadden, however, felt it was more important to protect his public image than the feelings of his grieving wife.

Billy was not the only child that Macfadden lost. Byrne Macfadden, the daughter from his first marriage to Marguerite Kelly, had been raised in Canada by her mother and had little contact with her father while growing up, but moved to New York in the early 1920s to work for his publications. Byrne was not a dedicated physical culturist—she enjoyed drinking, dancing, and smoking, much to her father's chagrin.



Byrne Macfadden (left), Bernarr's daughter from his marriage with Marguerite Kelly, moved to New York in the early 1920s to work for the publishing company. This photograph with Helen (right) and "Little Piggie" was taken 30 October 1923, just two-and-a-half years before her death due to a heart condition.

Despite this, Macfadden featured her in the article, "I Don't Know What Medicine Tastes Like," where she claimed to abstain from tea and coffee and live a wholesome lifestyle.⁷¹ In a tragically ironic twist, Byrne was born with a weak heart and fainted frequently. When she suffered a hemorrhage, her father stopped her salary to make sure she did not see a doctor. He promised to cure her with physical culture methods, but Byrne Macfadden died on 20 June 1926 at age 22.⁷² Macfadden refused to attend the funeral and forbade his office workers from speaking of Byrne. Vera Caspary, the editor of Macfadden's *Dance* magazine, reported that Macfadden told his grieving daughters that "it's better she's gone. She'd have disgraced me."⁷³ Image apparently came before everything for Macfadden, even before family.

The death of two children dealt a devastating blow to the ideal of the physical culture family. As the family became increasingly dysfunctional, the shine of their public image began to tarnish, and Macfadden invested less time in promoting himself as a "family man." He was to have two more sons after the death of Billy, but the spotlight was never to shine upon them as it had their sisters. Berwyn Macfadden was born prematurely on 13 October 1923. His birth was announced using an old photo-

graph of his sister Byrnece while the office staff gossiped that the child "was in no condition to boast about."⁷⁴ In her memoir, Mary claimed that Macfadden forced himself upon her, convinced that another child would lessen the grief of losing their son.⁷⁵ Two years later, the final physical culture child was born on 18 May 1925 and christened Bruce "Brewster" Macfadden.⁷⁶

THE END OF THE PHYSICAL CULTURE FAMILY

The course of Mary's marriage was charted by a growing sense of disillusionment and skepticism of her husband's physical culture methods. While the young Mary had unquestioningly obeyed his dictates of doing two-hundred knee bends a day while heavily pregnant, the birth of her first child changed her priorities. Mary recalls that when Macfadden attempted to plunge the two-day-old Byrnece in a bucket of ice water, she realized "this was my child. I had to save it . . . from him."⁷⁷

As the fault lines in the physical culture family began to grow, Macfadden became increasingly frustrated by the distance between the public image of his perfect family and the reality of their private lives. While his marriage disintegrated, and his children began to rebel against their physical culture regime through drinking, smoking, and overeating, Macfadden continued to promote his supposedly perfect family.⁷⁸ When Mary became suicidal over the death of their child, she was instructed by the Vice President of Macfadden Publications to think of the company's public image. She said, "I was identified in the public mind as the symbol of physical culture motherhood," and her death would be bad publicity.⁷⁹

The latter years of the Macfaddens' marriage were marred by bitter disputes. In one of the couple's many legal battles, Macfadden argued that his wife's weight gain of 50-100lbs—caused by her almost constant pregnancies—was a source of "humiliation" to him and meant that he could "no longer draw attention to his family."⁸⁰

Another source of contention between the couple was the question of raising their children. In court testimony, Mary claimed that they would have become "social misfits" and "confused mentally" if their father's dictates were always obeyed.⁸¹ Macfadden, despite be-



Bernarr's family appeared on the 25th anniversary cover of *Physical Culture*, November 1923, the same month that his first-born son, Byron "Billy" Macfadden, died.

ing a millionaire, worried that Mary encouraged the children to be frivolous with money and asked the children's governess to report on his wife's spending.⁸² The governess also admitted to her employer that physical culture had made first-class athletes, but the girls would not make good wives and mothers. There seemed to be no bonds between the sisters, "no affection, no fund, apparently of happy childhood memories."⁸³

Despite the growing discord in the Macfadden home, the muscular millionaire continued to capitalize and promote his family. In a 1927 article, "Choose Your Mate with Your Children in Mind," the Macfadden family portrait was used to illustrate the success of well-matched marriages.⁸⁴ Ironically, at this time Mary had resolved to send her children to boarding school to protect them from the "tyrannical exercises" of their father.⁸⁵ Mary may also have sent the children away to shield them from the increasingly violent scenes that occurred between the couple. Macfadden told the courts that in 1926

or 1927, Mary had taken a revolver from a secret door and threatened to shoot him. Mary refuted this allegation, claiming that she had been on the verge of committing suicide, but that "she was a crack shot and she could have shot him if she'd wanted to."⁸⁶ Another such incident took place shortly after their return from Italy. Macfadden allegedly threatened Mary with a chair during a heated argument. She retaliated by throwing a razorblade case at him, cutting his lip, and breaking two teeth.⁸⁷

It was around this time that Macfadden published an article celebrating the nude sculpture of his 12-year-old daughter Byrnece dedicated to "American Motherhood." He claimed the cast should serve as an ideal to all young women and offered it for sale to schools, libraries, and other public institutions. In an accompanying page, Macfadden featured a photograph of Mary from her contest-winning days, claiming that "her stalwart health and grace of body are as much in evidence now as then"⁸⁸—despite claiming in court that her failure to keep her body "beautiful, trim and healthy" had been humiliating for him.⁸⁹

Mary perfectly captured the dissonance between the physical culture family's public and private personas when she wrote, "while my daughters were emaciated again from three more weeks of fasting as a 'cure' for another childhood disease, their pictures were being printed in most of the country's newspapers as healthy, laughing specimens of the physical culture life."⁹⁰

In 1928, as the cracks continued to grow in the physical culture family façade, Macfadden attempted to leverage his "family man" image one last time in a bid to bolster his political ambitions. Mary recalls the family being loaded into a private car attached to the rear of a train on a tour of America intended to "advertise our physical culture family."⁹¹ He intended to show the country that he was not a fringe fanatic who published salacious newspapers and magazines, but a wholesome and respectable candidate for the presidency of the United States. Behind the scenes, however, Macfadden's behavior was erratic and often violent. Mary recalls standing beside her husband at the podium as he vowed to make the nation fitter and healthier, before returning to their railway carriage and sinking into despondency at the realization that he had not received a presidential nomination. On one such occasion, Mary claims, he "gave our five-year old Berwyn a kick which sent him sliding to the other end of the car."⁹²

END OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE IN COURTS

Despite years of marital disharmony, Macfadden had been able to keep the salacious details of his private life from the public. When the Macfaddens took their battles to court, it became impossible to separate the idealized image of the family from the dysfunctional reality.

In 1930, Mary had been ordered to lose 35 pounds to accompany her husband on a European tour which saw him meeting both Mussolini and the Pope. On the crossing to Italy, Mary recalled Macfadden telling her he wanted to have two more sons to fully prove his sex determination theory and “put the finishing touches on the physical culture family.”⁹³ Mary’s refusal sparked a series of rows and bitter recriminations which culminated on 5 October with Macfadden telling his wife that she and



This Associated Press wire photo appeared in 1943. The attached caption: “Mrs. Mary Macfadden, wife of Bernarr MacFadden, 74-year-old publisher, was charged with extreme cruelty and an ungovernable temper in a suit for divorce filed by her husband here today. They were married in London 31 years ago after she won a prize as the ideal feminine physical culturist.”

the children were “no longer necessary to his success” and even demanding a blood test to prove that they were his.⁹⁴ The pair separated in Paris and Macfadden travelled to Rome without her. From his hotel room, he penned her a letter that begged her to reduce her weight for the sake of “the future happiness of . . . the entire family.”⁹⁵

Mary returned to the Englewood estate ahead of her husband and the couple continued to live uneasily together after his return, sleeping in separate bedrooms. The pair formally separated in April 1932, but the contentious divorce battle was not finalized until 1946, and even a decade after the divorce was granted, Mary attempted to have it overturned.⁹⁶ Mary battled Macfadden for years over the \$15,000 annual settlement he continually evaded paying her, claiming penury amidst “financial reverses.”⁹⁷ In 1931, Macfadden endowed \$5,000,000—a hefty

portion of his estate—to the Macfadden Foundation, an organization dedicated to spreading physical culture principles for “World Benefit.”⁹⁸ This act of largesse was also an act of economic subterfuge. Mary’s claim that Macfadden was attempting to “deprive me and my family of our rights” by making it appear that he was without means.⁹⁹ When Macfadden’s second wife, Marguerite Macfadden, sued her husband for divorce the judge issued an order restraining Macfadden from “disposing of any of his property pending disposition of this case.”¹⁰⁰

The court battles between Bernarr and Mary brought a flurry of salacious headlines from Macfadden’s competitors. The press gleefully reported Mary’s accusations that the Father of Physical Culture had used his children as “guinea pigs” for his “crackpot ideas.”¹⁰¹ They also reported on Macfadden’s counterclaim that until “five years before, their six children were models that attracted nation-wide attention,” but Mary had discouraged them from exercising and permitted them to “smoke and drink in swanky speakeasies.”¹⁰² Headlines of alleged affairs also rolled off the presses. Murmurs of Macfadden’s indiscretions with young secretaries had echoed around the publishing offices for decades, but were kept from the public until he was sued for \$100,000 in

an “alienation of affection” lawsuit filed by the husband of one of his Battle Creek sanatorium employees.¹⁰³ When Mary accused her husband of cheating on her in court, Macfadden countered by citing her infidelities, and the press reported every detail of the physical culture family’s fall from grace.¹⁰⁴

If infidelity and domestic violence were not enough to tarnish the physical culture family’s reputation, the children’s outright rejection of their father’s health principles certainly was. Byrnece Macfadden was the most outspoken in her disavowal of her father, yet she never used her media spotlight to speak out against him. In a series of interviews with Jerome Clifford Waugh, a doctoral candidate who wrote his PhD dissertation on Macfadden in the 1970s, she was vociferous in her condemnation of the muscular millionaire’s parenting. She described her father as a “tyrant” and claimed that she and her sisters were exhausted by their “severe” exercise regime and “hated” physical culture.¹⁰⁵ Desperate to escape her unhappy household, she married at 17 years old in 1931.¹⁰⁶ Upon hearing of her engagement, Macfadden wrote to his daughter, warning her that he was worried as to the outcome of her marriage if she embarked upon it in her “present condition.” He had been wounded to learn that she had taken up smoking and urged her to undertake “at least three months vigorous training, six months would be better... walk five miles daily, gradually increase to ten. An hour at least every day should be spent in strengthening your entire body.”¹⁰⁷ Despite his disappointment that his own children had grown up to be “average, not outstanding,” he still believed he could improve and, perhaps, capitalize on the next generation.¹⁰⁸

Beulah Macfadden far preferred late nights and strong drinks to the austere rigors of physical culture. She began drinking heavily in high school and after graduation spent the summer under the supervision of the wife of Macfadden’s East Coast Representative. The intervention did not work. To her father’s humiliation, she snuck out to party with movie stars at seedy clubs and speakeasies, until her behavior became so out of control, she was sent away. Rumors of her alcohol dependency swirled around the Macfadden offices, but the family was able to keep her wild behavior and late-night antics from the press. If it had gotten out, they would have dealt irreparable harm to the physical culture family ideal. Though Beulah worked as an artist, she never overcame her alcoholism. She spent the last few years of her life living at her

father’s Dansville Physical Culture Hotel, where she died on 2 December 1961 at age 46.¹⁰⁹

Braunda Macfadden represented another failure of Macfadden’s physical culture parenting methods. She had impressed her father with her robust and sturdy frame as a child, but as she grew into adulthood, she began to struggle with her weight, just like her mother. The children’s governess warned her employer that the child posed a “walking challenge to all your Physical Culture ideals” and while at boarding school she was placed on a strict diet prescribed by the Macfadden Physical Culture Institute of Nutrition.¹¹⁰ As she grew older, she further disobeyed her father’s dictates by smoking and drinking heavily. She died of a heart attack at just 48 years old.¹¹¹

Beverly Macfadden was described by her governess at age 13 as a “hoodlum” with a penchant for spending large amounts of money on things “suitable only for a chorus girl . . . with a rich sugar daddy on the string.”¹¹² In 1937, she dropped out of school and secretly eloped with a druggist—a fact gleefully reported by the media.¹¹³ In 1958, a newspaper reported that despite growing up with enormous wealth, she was now a “working girl” employed as a proof-reader, who maintained her 135-pound weight by smoking, not exercising. Beverly gave a rare statement, claiming she found her life “nice. And more restful.”¹¹⁴

The Macfadden boys, though held up as proof of their father’s sex determination experiments, were always understudies to their sisters’ main acts. Macfadden had invested an enormous amount of time, money, and energy into promoting his daughters, but by the time the boys arrived the shine had come off the physical culture family and Macfadden was far more interested in airplanes and ill-advised political campaigns than his children.

Berwyn Macfadden attended Columbia University before serving in the army for three years. He married Arlynne Skuba in July 1947 and his brother Brewster served as an usher, suggesting a closeness between the brothers.¹¹⁵ He was rumored to have a drinking problem and in 1958 ended up in court for giving his 86-year-old father a nasty black eye after accusing him of causing him to lose his job as a dance-master.¹¹⁶ He later tried his hand at acting, appearing as an uncredited “barefoot hillbilly” in Elia Kazan’s *A Face in the Crowd*.¹¹⁷ His career never seemed to take off. Perhaps if he’d been given the same performance training and spotlight as his sisters, he could have been a success.



In 1953, during an unsuccessful campaign to become Mayor of New York City, the Macfadden family again appeared in the press. The caption read “Political candidates love to pose with their families during a campaign—and here’s the granddaddy of them all, 84-year-old Bernarr Macfadden, publisher and health crusader, who’s running for Mayor of New York on the “Honesty Party” ticket. He is the father of nine and the grandfather of 10. Standing, left to right: Danny Wieggers; Joe Wieggers; James MacDonald; Braunda St. Phillip; Beulah MacDonald; Roland Hebert; Diana Muckerman; L. Arthur St. Phillip; and Brewster Macfadden. Sitting, left to right: Wendy and Joan Wieggers; Helen Wieggers; Peter St. Phillip; Bernarr Macfadden; Jeffrey Hebert; Sandra St. Phillip; Byrnce Muckerman; Berwyn Macfadden; Michael Hebert, and Philip Hebert.

Brewster was the youngest of the physical culture family. Born in 1925, into a rapidly disintegrating family, he spent little time with his father who was more interested in chasing his political ambitions and building his media empire. Ironically, Brewster was the only child invited to his father’s wedding to fourth wife Johnnie Lee Macfadden. Braunda’s husband, Arthur St. Phillip, suggested that, at 23, Brewster was invited to make Macfadden appear younger when the media reported on the nuptials.¹¹⁸ Brewster was a talented swimmer and competed on the varsity team at Yale as part of a team of Olympic hopefuls, until the outbreak of World War II when he abandoned athletics to join the navy.¹¹⁹ Brewster worked as secretary for the Bernarr Macfadden Foundation after his father’s death in 1955, but ultimately shunned his father’s legacy and settled in North Carolina where he worked as a sales representative for Eagle Electric for over forty years.¹²⁰

Most of the Macfadden children rejected not only their father’s physical culture legacy, but his love of the spotlight. Though the girls

had performed before large audiences during their childhoods and were widely applauded as wonderful dancers and performers, the Macfaddenettes chose to remain anonymous in adulthood. Choosing silence over spectacle was perhaps the most outright repudiation of everything their father stood for.

Macfadden’s illegitimate daughter, Helen, had perhaps the most right to feel alienated from her physical culture family. She had lived her life on the side-lines of Macfadden’s promotional circus, being sent to live with various relatives or attend boarding schools while Macfadden established himself in the United Kingdom. Though she was presented as a part of the physical culture family, her place in it was always unclear. Despite this, Helen was the only child to follow in her father’s footsteps and remain close to him until his death. In her late teens, she began working at the Macfadden offices as a stenographer.¹²¹ At 18 she starred on Broadway in *Bernarr Macfadden’s Physical Culture Girls* where she performed physical culture exercises alongside a group of young girls.¹²² She went on

to perform in many other acts, such as *The Perfect Girl*, and even had a brief stint in the Ziegfeld Follies until she retired from the spotlight in 1937 to marry Joseph P. Weigers, the Macfadden circulation and publicity agent, in an intimate ceremony that took place at her father's Fifth Avenue apartment.¹²³ In the 1930s, she began a monthly column in *Physical Culture* giving exercise advice to business girls, and went on to publish her own health book in 1939 titled *Help Yourself to Beauty* that received favorable reviews.¹²⁴

Mary Macfadden spoke out against her ex-husband in her 1953 memoir, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips: The Story of Bernarr Macfadden*, co-authored with former Macfadden writer, Emile Gauvreau. She used the subsequent publicity to tell her story in national newspapers and magazines, both in America and the United Kingdom. Mary courted the press, launching a British book tour, and penning letters to her hometown's *Halifax Enquirer*.

She appeared in a spread for the *Yorkshire Observer*, which claimed that even though she was a 60-year-old mother of eight, she was still receiving marriage proposals. The piece ran far more flattering photographs of Mary than the press had used during their reports on the physical culture divorce, which had tended to focus on her weight and Macfadden's jibes that she had let herself go.¹²⁵ In another British newspaper, Mary made sure to mention that she had a "neat figure" of 150 pounds at 60 years of age.¹²⁶

There was renewed interest in Mary's story after the death of Macfadden on 12 October 1955, and the English newspaper, *The People*, began serializing her memoir that same month.¹²⁷ Mary's interest in attracting press publicity was perhaps to enhance her claims in court that she had played an instrumental role in building Macfadden's media empire and was entitled to a large portion of his estate. After the late 1950s, Mary seems to have retired gracefully to the sprawling Englewood estate where she'd spent her married life. Neighbors described her as a "lovely woman" with a "certain pleasant roundness."¹²⁸ She was often spotted walking vigorously around her neighborhood and remained active until her death at the age of 77 in 1969.¹²⁹

AFTERMATH

Macfadden's physical culture family was leveraged in both his own publications and in the national media to rehabilitate and enhance

his reputation as a respectable family man and a leading expert on domestic health and fitness. Images of his healthy, happy, and beautiful children were widely circulated as symbols of the success of physical culture child-rearing. The family possessed little agency in the construction of their public image and were often reduced to mere props in the media circus of Macfadden's self-aggrandizing publicity campaigns or the biological testing grounds for his theories. Through private deconstructions of their public images, however, the Macfadden family were able to regain control of their own narratives to escape their patriarch's authorship. Mary became increasingly vocal about where she agreed and disagreed with her husband's health principles, while her children tacitly disavowed their father's physical culture legacy through their disappearance from the spotlight that had shone upon them from birth. Mary Macfadden's lawyer claimed in court that "the stigma of Macfadden's life before he knew her had been wiped out by seventeen years of married life, publicized every step of the way. His name had acquired an aura of respectability which admittedly had never attended his efforts before."¹³⁰

While the presentation of the physical culture family was certainly orchestrated into a savvy public relations campaign to enhance Macfadden's public image, it cannot be argued that his life with Mary was simply a cynical media ploy. Macfadden truly believed in the sanctity of the home after his own peripatetic childhood of rural poverty and neglect. It is clear, however, that Macfadden's ultimate loyalty was to his cause. In his magazine, however, his family was first and foremost included in its pages as physical culture propaganda.

NOTES

1. Mary Macfadden, "I Married a Health Fiend," *The People*, 25 October 1955: 3.
2. Todd's paper on Macfadden won the 1986 North American Society for Sport History Graduate Essay Prize and appeared as: Jan Todd, "Bernarr Macfadden, Reformer of Feminine Form," *Journal of Sport History* 14, no. 1(Spring 1987): 78-96.
3. See Robert Ernst, *Weakness is a Crime: The Life of Bernarr Macfadden* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1990); William R. Hunt, *Body Love: The Amazing Career of Bernarr Macfadden* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Shannon L. Walsh, *Eugenics and Physical Culture Performance in the Progressive Era: Watch Whiteness Workout* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) particularly

- Chapter Four; Kathleen L. Endres, "The Feminism of Bernarr Macfadden: Physical Culture Magazine and the Empowerment of Women," *Media History Monographs* 13, no. 2 (2015): 1-14.
4. Mary Macfadden v. Bernarr Macfadden and Macfadden Foundation, (volume unknown) Supreme Court of NY Appellate Division Reports, 1 (1935): 200; found at <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=f9KTOgzLfoYC&pg=GBS.PA598&printsec=frontcover>.
 5. Todd, "Bernarr Macfadden: Reformer of Feminine Form," 72.
 6. Macfadden's first Physical Culture Exhibition ran from 28 December 1903 to 2 January 1904. It is normally referred to as a 1903 event.
 7. "Comstock Takes Hand in Physical Culture Show," *New York Times*, 6 October 1905, p. 9.
 8. "Union Suit Pictures Bad," *The Sun*, 29 March 1906, p. 6.
 9. "Macfadden Had Gone to Europe," *The Central New Jersey News*, 24 October 1906, p. 1.
 10. "Physical Culture Effects Demonstrated in Fine Competition," *Birmingham Gazette and Express*, 26 April 1906, p. 6.
 11. "Bernarr M' 'Fad' Den's City of Few Clothes," *The Topeka Daily Capital*, 21 June 1906, p. 4.
 12. "Physical Culture City" website at: www.bernarrmacfadden.com/pccity.html.
 13. "Airy Garb Shocks Villagers," *The Uniontown News*, 24 August 1906, p. 1.
 14. "Comstock Now After Macfadden," *The Central New Jersey Home News*, 14 February 1907, p. 2.
 15. Macfadden was pardoned by President Taft in 1909 and never served his custodial sentence. He was never reimbursed for his payment of the \$2000 fine, which blackened his view of Taft.
 16. Bernarr Macfadden, "Editor's Viewpoint," *Physical Culture* (August 1912): 122.
 17. "Noted Athlete in Police Net," *Washington Herald*, 14 June 1912, p. 5.
 18. Bernarr Macfadden, "Bernarr Macfadden on the Physical Culture Movement, Past and Present," *Physical Culture* (April 1915): 357.
 19. "Value of Health Culture," *The Inter-Ocean*, 26 April 1908, p. 5; and "The Welsh-Summers Match," *Evening Express*, 15 October 1909, p. 4. See also: "Freddie Welsh" at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freddie_Welsh.
 20. Bernarr Macfadden, "Physical Culture Wave Circling the Civilized World," *Physical Culture* (July 1903): 93.
 21. See Mary Macfadden and Emile Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips: The Story of Bernarr Macfadden* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1953), 47; and "Our £100 Prize Beauty Contest," *Woman's Health and Beauty* 15, no. 1 (January 1913): 2.
 22. Bernarr Macfadden file, FBI, no. 62-33905, sec. 1, quoted in Ernst, *Weakness is a Crime*, 54.
 23. Fulton Oursler, "Bernarr Macfadden: His Life and His Work," *Physical Culture* (March 1929): 54.
 24. See *Macfadden v. Macfadden*, 10; and "England and Wales Births 1837-2006," database, FindMyPast.co.uk. www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD/B/1892/3/AZ/000638/166. Accessed 23 November 2021.
 25. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 3.
 26. Ibid.
 27. See Grace Perkins, *Chats with the Macfadden Family* (New York: Lewis Copeland, 1929), 7; "Swimming: Two Interesting Local Galas," *Halifax Evening Courier*, 6 October 1906; "Winner of £100: Miss Mary Williamson's Notable Distinction," *Halifax Evening Courier*, 17 February 1913.
 28. "Our £100 Prize Beauty Contest," 2.
 29. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 20.
 30. Ibid., 19; "Fred Welsh's Sister Married," *The Merthyr Express*, 19 March 1910, p. 6.
 31. *Macfadden v. Macfadden*, 11.
 32. Ibid.
 33. Ibid., 3.
 34. *Macfadden v. Macfadden*, 200.
 35. Ibid., 644.
 36. Macfadden, "I Married a Health Fiend," *The People*, 30 October 1955: 2.
 37. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 135.
 38. Perkins, *Chats*, 12.
 39. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 139.
 40. Ernst, *Weakness is a Crime*, 46.
 41. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 121.
 42. *Macfadden v. Macfadden*, 766.
 43. See Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 279; "Determining the Sex of Your Child," *Physical Culture* (March 1922): 39; and Macfadden entry on "SS Lusitania Passenger Manifest," 24 October 1914, page 25, lines 31-34.
 44. Macfadden, "Your Old Editor is Back at the Helm," *Physical Culture* (October 1916): 5.
 45. Macfadden, "Bernarr Macfadden's Viewpoint," *Physical Culture* (September 1918): 11.
 46. Macfadden, "My Life Purpose," *Physical Culture* (September 1917): 73.
 47. Macfadden, "Don't Lay Baby on Its Back," *Physical Culture* (October 1918): 48.
 48. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 354, 138.
 49. *Macfadden v. Macfadden*, 232.
 50. Macfadden, "Bernarr Macfadden on the Physical Culture Movement," 356-360.
 51. *Macfadden v. Macfadden*, 221.
 52. Ibid., 224.
 53. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 215-216.
 54. Macfadden, "Determining the Sex," 38.
 55. See Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 214; and *Macfadden v. Macfadden*, 224.
 56. Helen Moller and Curtis Denham, *Dancing with Helen Moller* (New York: John Lane Co., 1918), 51.
 57. Interview with Byrnece Macfadden Muckerman, 21 April 1973, quoted in Jerome Clifford Waugh, "Bernarr Macfadden: The Muscular Prophet," (PhD dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1979): 218, footnote 16.
 58. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 393.
 59. Ibid., 243.
 60. Ibid., 241.
 61. Perkins, *Chats*, 4; and *Macfadden v. Macfadden*, 99. Even a Kentucky newspaper referred to them as the physical culture family. See: "Bernarr Macfadden Attacks Unlawful Literary Censorship," *Kentucky Advocate*, 19 May 1923, p. 1.
 62. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 393.
 63. Perkins, *Chats*, 84.
 64. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 326.
 65. Ibid., 247.
 66. Ibid., 231.
 67. Macfadden, "Determining the Sex," 38.
 68. Ibid., 40.
 69. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 333.

69. Macfadden, "The Story of Little Billy," *Physical Culture* (February 1923): 22.
70. Fulton Oursler, *Behold This Dreamer!* (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1964), 173.
71. Byrne Macfadden, "I Don't Know What Medicine Tastes Like," *Physical Culture* (April 1924): 49-51.
72. Ernst, *Weakness is a Crime*, 70.
73. Vera Caspary, *The Secrets of Grownups* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1979), 87.
74. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 364.
75. *Ibid.*, 340.
76. Brewster Macfadden draft card, National Archives, St. Louis, Missouri; WWII Draft Registration Cards for New Jersey, 10/16/1940-03/31/1947; Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Box: 402.
77. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 139.
78. See Waugh, "Bernarr Macfadden: The Muscular Prophet," 219-220, footnote 21.
79. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 345.
80. Bernarr Macfadden vs. Mary Macfadden, No. 77430-A, Dade County Record Center, Box No. 86-821. Chancery Circuit Court, Dade County, Florida, 28, 78.
81. "The Perfect Union Didn't Last," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 4 March 1945, p. 53.
82. Marjorie Greenbie to Bernarr Macfadden, office memo, 12 March 1931, Special Collections Division of University of Oregon Library. Taft Collection, Stark Center.
83. Greenbie to Macfadden, Greenbie Papers, KLUE, quoted in Ernst, *Weakness is a Crime*, 158.
84. Dr. Elizabeth Taylor Ransom, "Choose Your Mate With Your Children In Mind," *Physical Culture* (April 1927): 33.
85. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 393.
86. Bernarr Macfadden vs. Mary Macfadden, Special Master's Report, 7, 1945. Taft Collection, Stark Center.
87. Bernarr Macfadden vs. Mary Macfadden. Proceedings before Hon. John C. Grambling, Special Master, Chancery Case no. 77430, circuit court in and for Dade County, Florida, 1943-1946.
88. John Hayden, "Radiant Girlhood," *Physical Culture* (March 1927): 37.
89. "Rugged Living' Exponent Macfadden Dies at 87," *The Shreveport Times*, 13 October 1955, p. 18.
90. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 357.
91. *Ibid.*, 399; and "Bernarr Macfadden to Give Talk Here," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 21 October 1928, p. 2.
92. Macfadden and Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips*, 399.
93. *Ibid.*, 404.
94. *Macfadden v. Macfadden*, 767. Macfadden repeated this accusation in a letter to Mary in March 1931.
95. *Ibid.*, 22.
96. "Macfadden Divorce Fought," *New York Times*, 10 June 1954, p. 34.
97. "Macfadden Divorce Suits: Counter-Actions by Publisher and Wife Filed at Trenton," *New York Times*, 21 September 1933, p. 10.
98. "Donates \$500,000,000 to Promote Health," *New York Times*, 25 September 1931, p. 16.
99. *Macfadden v. Macfadden*, 779.
100. "Wife Sues Macfadden," *New York Times*, 6 August 1911, p. 11.
101. "Ridicules M'Fadden Ideas," *New York Times*, 8 February 1945, p. 11.
102. "Macfadden Girl Secretly Wed," *The Record*, 2 December 1937, p. 1.
103. "\$100,000 Suit Pending Against Macfadden," *The Baltimore Sun*, 25 March 1934, p. 10.
104. "Macfadden Divorce Suits," *New York Times*, 21 November 1933, p. 10.
105. Interview with Byrnee Macfadden Muckerman, 220.
106. "Milestones," *Time*, 24 August 1931. <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,753006,00.html>. Accessed 11 November 2021. Her age was incorrectly reported as 19.
107. Bernarr Macfadden to Byrnee Macfadden (undated correspondence, 1931) quoted in Waugh, 243.
108. *Bernarr Macfadden vs. Mary Macfadden*, No 77430-A, 41.
109. See Ernst, *Weakness is a Crime*, 155; and "Beulah Macfadden," *New York Times*, 3 December 1961, p. 88.
110. Greenbie to Macfadden, quoted in Ernst, 155. Greenbie to Macfadden, telegram [n.d.] and a copy of the diet, Greenbie Papers, Special Collections Division, Oregon University Library.
111. "St. Phillip-Macfadden," *New York Times*, 7 June 1936, p. 43.
112. Greenbie to Macfadden, office memo, 12 March 1931.
113. "Macfadden Girl Secretly Wed," 1.
114. "Exercise By the Numbers," *Reno Gazette-Journal*, 1 November 1958, p. 16.
115. "Miss Skuba Bride of B. Macfadden," *New York Times*, 20 July 1947, p. 42.
116. "Son Hangs a Shiner on Papa Macfadden," *Daily News*, 7 October 1954, p. 93.
117. Danton Walker, "Broadway," *Daily News*, 28 May 1957, p. 131.
118. Arthur St. Phillip to Clifford Waugh, 21 March 1973, quoted in Waugh, 221, footnote 24.
119. "Olympic Stars Compete," *New York Times*, 28 June 1948, p. 24.
120. "Memorial Page for Brewster 'Bruce' Macfadden," *Munden Funeral Home* webpage, www.mundenfuneralhome.net/obituary/BrewsterBruce-Macfadden. Accessed 1 November 2021. See also: Betty Foxworth, "New York City Chain Hotel Owner Buys Macfadden 'Health Center' in Dansville," *Democrat and Chronicle*, 30 November 1955, p. 39.
121. "Miss Macfadden and Physical Culture Girls Score Big Hit at Rivoli," *The Central New Jersey Home News*, 4 November 1924, p. 5.
122. *Ibid.*
123. "Helen Macfadden Has Home Wedding," *New York Times*, 18 September 1937, p. 16. Helen was previously married in 1926, aged 19, to her father's editor Alexander Markey, but there is no record of how this marriage ended.
124. See Helen Macfadden, "Personality and Pep for Business Girls," *Physical Culture* (December 1936); Macfadden, *Help Yourself to Beauty* (New York: Macfadden Book Co., 1939); and "The First Reader," *The Tacoma News Tribune*, 7 May 1939, p. 8.
125. "Wedding Proposal from Her Native Yorks for a 60-Year-Old Mother of 8," *The Yorkshire Observer*, 6 October 1953, p. 5.
126. "Life With Macfadden," *Evening Standard*, 5 October 1953, p. 4.
127. Macfadden, "I Married a Health Fiend," 25 October 1955, 3.
128. Interview with George Davies, 6 October 1982, in the Taft Collection, Stark Center.
129. Interview with Campbell Norsgaard, 30 December 1981, in the Taft Collection, Stark Center.
130. *Macfadden v. Macfadden*, 21.