

# IOWA HISTORY



(Photo Courtesy Library of Congress)  
Davenport in 1907

## Musician and Stenographer Go Four Rounds

Dressed in “short skirts and close fitting waists,” Lulu Crawford and Opal Adair were prepared to go at it. The two young women from “prominent and respected” families in Davenport had been squabbling for some time over a young man during the summer of 1907. Friends had tried to get the two women to reconcile, but their endeavors were “in vain” according to news reports. It was decided the two would settle their differences in a boxing match to be held on Saturday, August 10.

Lulu, a private music teacher, and Opal, a stenographer in a local real estate office, were both well-prepared for a physical confrontation—having been involved in outdoor sports and other athletic activities. On the night of the big event several “automobile loads” of men and women—also from well-known families—gathered in a field just outside the city limits. An old clothes line had been stretched around a 24-foot area to create an arena for the bout.

Opal threw the first punch and immediately drew blood from Lulu. Stunned by the blow, Lulu fell to the ground when Opal “scored a clean knockdown” in the third round. She was down to the count of eight before managing to struggle to her feet. Lulu’s supporters repeatedly claimed “foul play” about the unfair tactics of her opponent. They said the tufts of hair visible in Opal’s clenched fists were proof of her unsportsmanlike behavior. Both girls appeared “exhausted” as the fight progressed to the next round.

Suddenly, near the completion of the fourth round, the referee swiftly called off the fight. The young people feared the arrival of police when they spotted a figure approaching the site across the open field. It turned out to be a farmer carrying his milking stool, but it caused the crowd to disperse. No one wanted to be identified and see their names in the newspapers.

However, news of the affair spread—not only in the Davenport area. Newspapers across the country, including Virginia, North Carolina, and San Francisco carried accounts of the boxing match between two “maidens” from the heartland.

## Sources

“Girls Fight Battle,” *Weekly Republican*, Aug 1, 1907.

“Two Girls Fight With Fists to Settle Feud,” *San Francisco Call*, July 26, 1907.

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