

Carolyn Babcock Stark: Billings-Born Tennis Star

Carolyn Babcock was born in Billings in 1912, the granddaughter of banker and developer Albert Babcock, whose name still appears on the Babcock Theatre. Her path to tennis stardom started on the courts of Pioneer Park, where her father Lewis Babcock coached her on her first volleys. He moved the family to the Los Angeles area in 1927, and Carolyn completed school there, winning junior tournaments along the way. She entered the senior division and won her first tournament in December 1931.



Carolyn Babcock and Helen Jacobs

In her heyday, Babcock was ranked among the top ten among women players in the United States at a time when American women dominated the sport. She reached the finals of the US Open in singles in 1932, ending up as runner-up to the great Helen Jacobs. In doubles, she did even better, reaching the finals in 1934 and 1935 with partner Dorothy Andrus, and in 1937 with partner Marjorie Gladman Van Ryn. Babcock and Van Ryn took the Doubles championship in 1936 against Jacobs and Sarah Palfrey Cooke. She also won at the Seabright Invitational, then one of the major tournaments on the circuit. She won there in singles in 1934, and in doubles in 1935.

Babcock also played on four Wightman Cup teams from 1933 through 1936. The Wightman Cup was an annual team tennis competition for women between the US and Great Britain, held from 1923-1989. It was founded as the women's counterpart to the Davis Cup. The American team won the Wightman Cup each of those four years.

Babcock married Richard Stark in 1937. The marriage failed after ten years, and Mrs. Stark moved back to California, living in Malibu until 1980. She then moved to New York, living in the Hamptons area of Long Island near her son until her death in 1987.

Sources:

Billings Gazette, "Carolyn Babcock to Play Exhibition Match Sunday", October 30, 1933

New York Times, "Carolyn Stark is Dead; Tennis Star in 1930's", March 31, 1987

Wikipedia, "Carolyn Babcock" Retrieved 8/7/2018

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Photo of Carolyn Babcock and Helen Jacobs, tennisforum.com, Retrieved August 18, 2018.