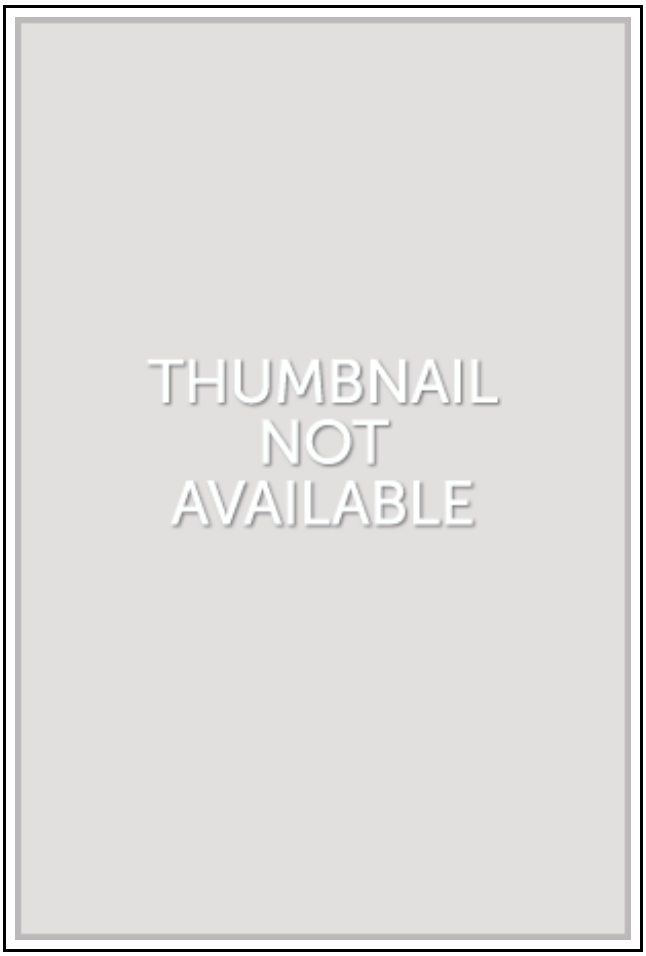
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University of Massachusetts Press. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Senda Berenson: The Unlikely Founder of Women's Basketball, Ralph Melnick, In the winter of 1892, the new instructor of physical training at Smith College, a diminutive young woman with a heavy accent, introduced her students to an adaptation of James Naismith's new game of Basket Ball. An immediate if unexpected success, the game spread to other women's schools across the country, and soon its founder, Senda Berenson (1868-1954), was called upon to codify its distinctive set of gender-specific rules. Emphasizing team passing and position over individual play, the version she instituted defined women's basketball for seventy years and eventually earned her the honor of being the first female elected to the Basketball Hall of Fame. Yet, as Ralph Melnick points out, Berenson's pioneering role in the history of women's athletics was more a matter of accident than destiny. A Jewish immigrant from Lithuania, prone to ill health throughout her childhood, she enrolled in the Boston Normal School for Gymnastics in the fall of 1890 with the hope of strengthening herself so that she could pursue a career as a pianist, dancer, or painter. Instead, she soon became both a practitioner and a proponent of a new approach to women's physical education, one aimed at providing a "natural outlet of the play instinct," developing "endurance and physical courage" as well as "quickness of thought and action," and promoting through team work the "power of organization" women needed to achieve full social equality. Extending her work into the factories and blighted urban tenements of America, Berenson later won the recognition of Jane Addams, Margaret Sanger, and other progressive reformers. Believing that "Americans have forgotten how to play," she wanted to teach others to live "joyfully - beautifully." For Berenson, the physical culture...

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