

“Jeannette Hayner’s Impact on Walla Walla Schools” (unattributed)

In 1956 a group of women helped elect Jeannette Hayner as a write-in candidate to the Walla Walla School Board. The citizens of Walla Walla, under the leadership of the majority members of the school board, had voted a large bond issue to remodel Walla Walla High School at its downtown location, which is currently the site of the YMCA. The Board makeup was then four men and one woman. Jeannette vigorously opposed remodeling and urged the board and the community to build a new high school on at least thirty acres of land. She was only able to convince one member of the board to relocate.

Before the plans to remodel had been completed, another School Board election took place and two of the male members who supported remodeling were on the ballot for re-election. Jeannette had convinced a physician and a realtor, who agreed with her vision for a new high school, to file against the incumbents. After each won, the Board vote was then four to build a new high school and one vote to remodel. The citizens of Walla Walla were badly divided on the issue. A law suit followed and town hall-type meetings were held, but Jeannette and her recruited members never wavered. At one large meeting a prominent member of the opposition shouted that he had in hand a petition with more than 5000 signatures to keep the high school at its existing location. Jeannette’s response was “Mr. Berney, I don’t care if everyone in Walla Walla signs your petition, it is short sighted and wrong, and we will not change our minds.”

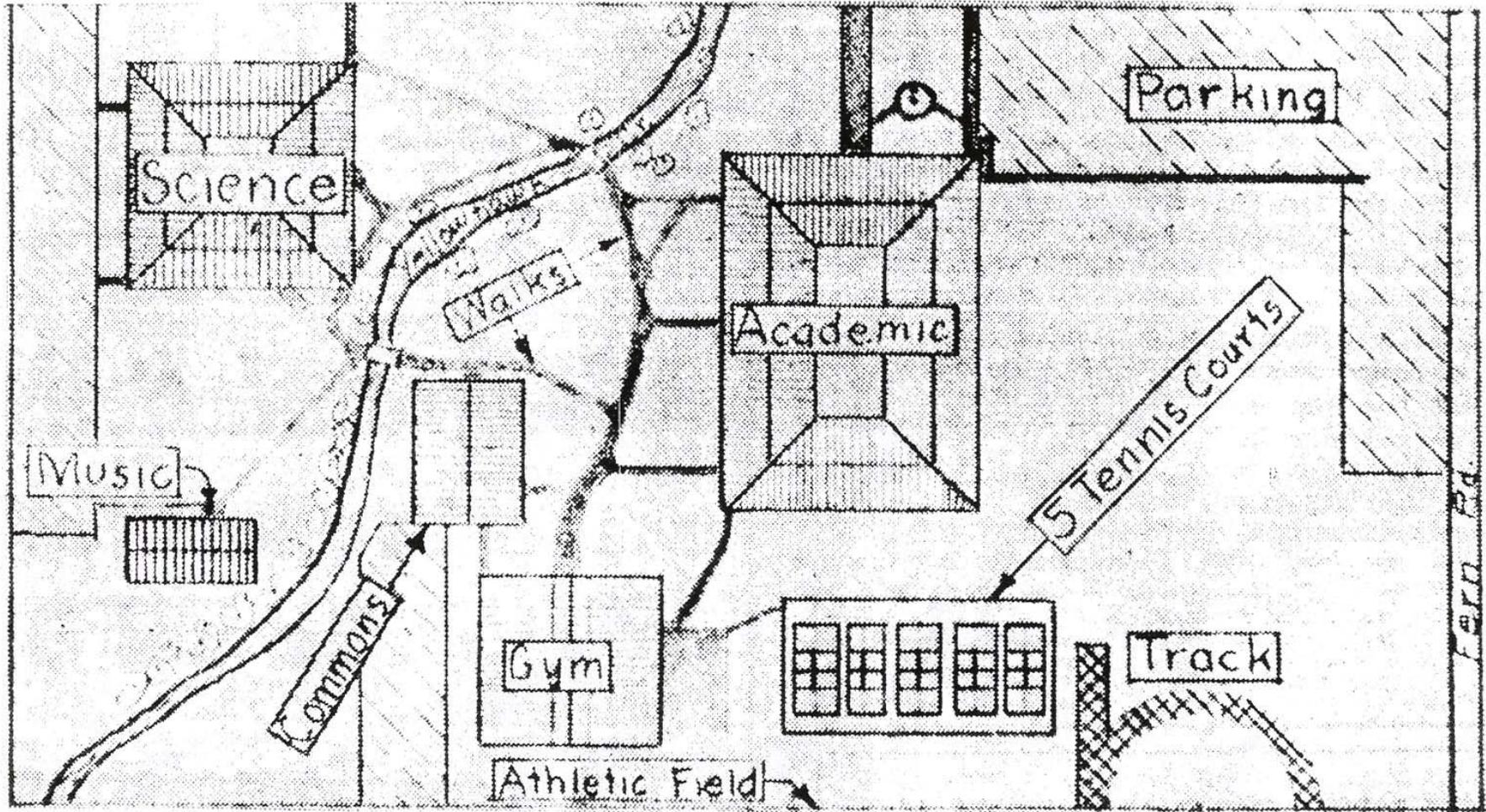
A campus type high school was built on 33 acres of land outside the city limits. When the old high school buildings became vacant, it gave the state of Washington a new Community College without a capital investment for new buildings. The Walla Walla Community College has been such a success that it now has its own buildings and campus. The vacated high school buildings then became the home of an expanded and rebuilt YMCA.

Michael Murr, an early graduate of the new Walla Walla High School, received a scholarship to Harvard College, made a fortune on Wall Street, purchased fifty acres of land across the street from the High School and built the Murr Sports Center, which has two baseball fields with grandstands and brick dug-outs, a softball field for women, soccer fields, tennis courts, asphalt parking and many other amenities. Two successful School Board elections more than forty-five years ago and a stubborn, spirited lady have had a huge impact on our community.

In retrospect, it was the association of Walla Walla women that made the difference. They convinced Jeannette, after the time of filing for the School Board had expired, to allow them to use her name as a sticker candidate. Those women led the campaign and on election day had two people handing out Jeannette Hayner stickers, within legal distance, at every polling place in the Walla Walla School District.

Plan for Walla Walla High School:

NEW WA-HI



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