

EARLY EDUCATION IN WALLA WALLA

The first school in Walla Walla was taught in 1857 by Harry Freedman of Troop E, 1st Dragoons, at Fort Walla Walla for the benefit of children of officers, soldiers, employees, and early settlers..

In the winter of 1861-1862, Mrs. A.J. Miner taught a class of some forty pupils in a store building on Main Street. That spring she was given a certificate by the county superintendent and her class was changed into the first public school. Several private classes also continued to be taught by other teachers. Attendance fluctuated greatly according to needs for help at home and on the farm.

Some of the teachers were strict disciplinarians. According to Angie Burt Bowden in Early Schools of Washington Territory, "No lickin, No larnin" was a maxim thoroughly accepted. Teachers who didn't understand how to manage a class were dealt with harshly by the students, who devised many ways to make life miserable for them, and saw their lashings as a joke. A popular method was to throw 'spit-balls' at teachers' backs while they were at the blackboard.



Boys went barefooted to school most of the year. Swimming holes along Mill Creek were often sought out before and after school. Playing hookey was frequent.

Grading was far from perfect, with brighter students taken over the same subjects many times, and others staying on from year to year until they were grown. Subjects taught were arithmetic, algebra, geography, history, grammar, spelling, natural philosophy (the sciences), reading and writing.

--from Early Schools of Washington Territory, A.B. Bowden

WALLA WALLA 2020 HISTORIC RESEARCH & PLAQUE SERVICE

If you would like to honor a building or property by obtaining a research report on its history all the way back to when it was bare ground owned by local Tribes, and by displaying a handsome plaque listing the date of construction, along with the names of owners and builders, you can do so by contacting the Walla Walla 2020 Historic Research & Plaque Service.

For qualifying properties, Walla Walla 2020 will research the title, construction, and occupant history, and provide a written report along with proposed plaque language. The research fee for residences is \$100; the fee for other properties ranges from \$150-\$250 depending on the complexity of the title and occupancy history.

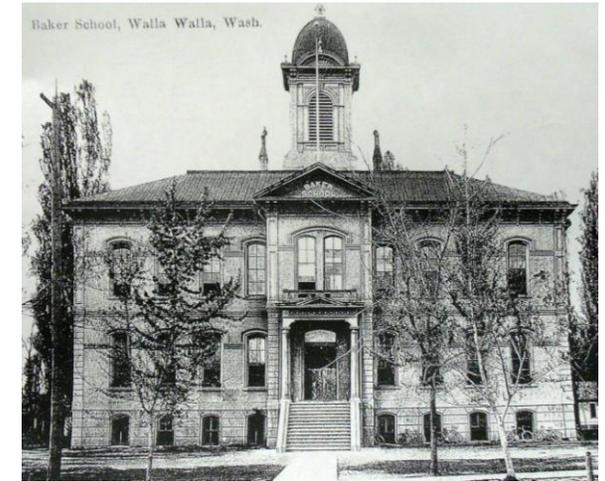
Qualifying properties may be in any neighborhood but must be more than 50 years old, and have retained their architectural integrity. For those properties accepted, a photo of the current property along with the completed research report will be included in the Walla Walla 2020 Interactive Map of Historic Properties available on the internet at www.ww2020.net under the Architecture & Neighborhoods tab.

Following completion of the report, the property owner may order a plaque for display on the property. The cost of a basic 9"x 6" six-line plaque is \$50, with additional lines and sizes available on request. Application information is available online at www.ww2020.net under the Architecture & Neighborhoods tab.

Historic Sites & Markers Project

For more information on Baker School and other little-known Walla Walla area historic sites, go to www.ww2020.net/historic-sites. If you would like to help with the marking & interpretation of this and other significant sites, please send tax-deductible donations to Walla Walla 2020, PO Box 1222, Walla Walla WA 99362, call 509-522-0399, or email ww2020@charter.net.

HISTORIC BAKER SCHOOL



Original brick building, 1883

First School Building in
Walla Walla and the Inland Empire,
1866

East Sumach Street between Spokane & Palouse



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First School Building in Walla Walla and the Inland Empire

The first public school building in the Inland Empire was erected on East Sumach Street in Walla Walla in 1866.

Prior to 1862 there had been no public school organization in Walla Walla, though a county superintendent of schools had been appointed by the Washington Territorial Legislature in 1859. In 1862 Walla Walla School District #1 was organized, a room was rented, and a teacher appointed.

Progress lagged until the fall of 1864, when there was a school-age population of 203, only ninety-three of whom were enrolled. At that time a tax was levied for the erection of a wooden, one-story, two-room school building at a cost of \$2000.

In August 1865, the School District paid \$200 for the full block between Sumach, Spokane, Cherry & Palouse streets as a school site, which basically constituted a donation of the land by the sellers, A.J. Cain and his wife, who used the money to pay off a mortgage on the land held by Dorsey S. Baker.

Classes, for which students were charged a small fee, began on this site in March 1866 in what was the first public school building in the eastern part of Washington Territory.

Attendance was quite irregular, especially in the fall and spring. Those who lived a long distance rode horses, while many walked several miles to school.



Circa 1910



First brick building erected 1883

Baker School, 1883-1930

In 1882, the voters of the School District approved a much more ambitious building plan, levying a tax of \$17,000 to erect a larger and more substantial building. The levy didn't raise enough money, though, and additional public donations were required to enable the school to be built of brick. As a result of this, the building was named for Dorsey S. Baker, a major donor.



L to R, Misses Russell, 4th grade, Messegee, 3rd gr, Prendergast, 6th gr, Howland, 2d gr, Mr. York, custodian, Misses Thomas, principal, Purinton, 5th gr, Preston, 1st gr, and Ramsdell, 7th gr. Photo circa 1918.

First High School, 1889

In 1889, when the School District offered secondary classes for the first time, Walla Walla's first high school students were housed at Baker School. For the following year, high school students were transferred to Paine School, now known as Lincoln School, which had been erected in 1888, where a third floor was completed for high school purposes.

The Walla Walla School District's first high school class graduated in 1893. By 1900 the total number of graduates was eighty. In 1917 Walla Walla High School had 821 day students; another 127 studied at night.



May 1933

Baker School, 1931-1955

Baker School underwent remodeling in 1931, during which the tall tower was removed and the front entrance was lowered to ground level (photo below).



1931 remodel, photo from 1955

Baker continued to serve elementary school students until 1955, when the school was closed and sold at public auction. In 1957 the building was razed.



1948--All Photos thanks to Bygone Walla Walla by Joe Drazan