



The Conception, Construction, and Completion of the Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium

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Alexis Noelle Chauvette

Dedication:

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, this research paper was written in a fully virtual setting, with both class lectures and archival material only accessible online. Virtual or not, writing this paper would not have been possible without the instruction from Professor Virginia Drachman and the tremendous support from Pam Hopkins, the Tufts Archives' Public Services and Outreach Archivist. Both woman's support was instrumental, and I thank them for their passion and dedication to myself and my fellow classmates.

¹ Images from Tufts Facilities Records, "Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium," pdf, 8.

This paper explores the conception, construction, and completion of the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium, and how its story provides insight towards the underlying narratives of the female athletes and sports of Jackson College at Tufts University from 1945 to 1950.

Origin Story

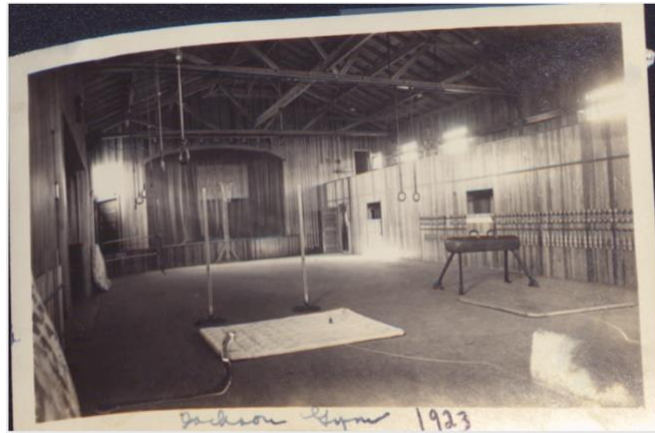


Image 2: Photo of the old Jackson gymnasium in 1923.²

In 1908, Tufts acquired a clubhouse which was “enlarged and remodeled and became a women’s gymnasium, which doubled also as a home for the expanding activities of the dramatics.”³ This refurbished building served as the main gymnasium for Jackson students for 37 years until, in September of 1945, the Old Colony Trust Company proposed a donation - through the Paul Wilde Jackson Fund - of \$200,000 for the construction of the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium. In a letter to Civilian Production of Administration on March 22nd, 1947, President Leonard Carmichael explained that the old Jackson Gymnasium was so run down that the Jackson women used Cousens Gymnasium, the Tufts men’s gym, during World War II. As many male students had left campus to fight in the war or were part of the war effort in other regards,

² Images from Tufts Facilities Records, “Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium,” pdf, 4.

³ Miller, Russell, *Light on the hill: A history of Tufts College*, 1986, Digital Collections and Archive Records, 205.

there was increased space available. While this worked during the war, it was evident as more men began returning to campus that this could not be a long-term solution according to President Carmichael:

“This expedient served reasonably well during the war, when there was a reduction in the number of civilian men students in our campus, but not with more than 100% increase in men students, it has become virtually impossible to find space in the men’s gymnasium at Tufts for the essential women’s athletic work.”⁴

After the funds provided by Paul Wilde Jackson in memorial of his brother Henry Clay Jackson were secured and provided courtesy of the Old Colony Trust Company, President Carmichael corresponded extensively with Mr. S. Parkman Shaw, Vice President of Old Colony Trust Company, and both acknowledged and relayed their appreciation towards the project.

In a letter to Mr. Shaw on November 26th, 1945, President Carmichael wrote that “this gift will not only remedy the greatest lack at Jackson College but will also do a great deal in indirect ways for the whole educational life of Jackson College.”⁵ In his response, Mr. Shaw also expressed his sentiments towards the project, stating “it goes without saying that it gives us great pleasure to contribute to such an interesting project.”⁶ It is important to note that much of the decision-making towards the construction of the Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium was done by President Carmichael. While Jackson College was receiving this generous donation, as a subset of Tufts College (Tufts officially became a university in 1955), President Carmichael and other members of the Tufts Trustees were included in letters as well as Trustees of the Jackson Fund and the acting Jackson Dean. Additionally, it was confirmed that in the event of the construction

⁴ Letter to Civilian Production of Administration from Leonard Carmichael, March 22, 1947, Jackson Facilities Box, pdf, 47.

⁵ Letter from Dr. Leonard Carmichael to Mr. S. Parkman Shaw, November 26, 1945, Jackson Facilities Box, pdf, 31.

⁶ Letter from Shaw to Carmichael, November 27, 1945, Jackson Facilities Box, pdf, 32.

costs exceeding the \$200,000 donated, Tufts College would authorize “the completion of the building substantially in accordance with the plans furnished, in case the \$200,000 gift does not cover the full cost of the erection of the memorial gymnasium.”⁷ This confirmation allowed the project to continue forward and on November 29th, 1945, the headline “Gift Provides for New Jackson Gym” was seen in the *Tufts Weekly*, breaking the news of the imminent construction of the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium to the student body.

The article, titled “Henry Clay Jackson Fund for Gymnasium to ‘Encurven’ Co-eds”, reported that the new gym would “form part of the growing group of women’s buildings on the Tufts campus.”⁸ Post-WWII expansionism was seen across campuses nationwide, as noted by Herman Lee Donovan, the President of the University of Kentucky from 1941-1956. In his book, *Keeping the University Free and Growing*, Donovan highlights that “the years of [his] administration, especially after the close of World War II, were times of great expansion in the University.”⁹ While Tufts College and the University of Kentucky had little in common in the 1940s, both campuses experienced the same expansionistic mindset. Post-war expansion, paired with the continuation of the idea that gender-defined space was needed for both male and female students, can be seen in the construction of the Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium, all-female dorms, and in the other Jackson student spaces mentioned in the *Tufts Weekly* Article.

The November 29th article not only mentioned the additional ‘women’s space’ that would be created but also provided insight into the features of the new gymnasium, reporting that “the basketball floor will be a full-size championship court,” and it would also house “a special

⁷ Letter from Carmichael to Shaw, November 23, 1945, Jackson Facilities Box, pdf, 29.

⁸ “Henry Clay Jackson Fund for Gymnasium to ‘Encurven’ Co-eds,” *Tufts Weekly*, November 29, 1945, Gift Provides for New Jackson Gym, Digital Collections and Archive Records.

⁹ Herman Lee Donovan, *Keeping the University Free and Growing* (n.p.: University Press of Kentucky, 1959), 46, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt130jm1s>.

posture room, an exercise room, a lounge complete with a fireplace and a small adjoining kitchen... offices, storerooms, lockers and showers.”¹⁰ Overall, this article provides perspective on the idea that womanhood or femininity had to ‘compete’ with the supposed mannishness of sports. For example, while the gymnasium would have a championship-sized court, it would also house ‘womanly’ things like a posture room and a kitchen, two things not found in Cousens Gym. This dynamic truly cannot be understated as it is an underlying narrative in the broader story of Jackson sports and the construction of the Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium.

Construction



Image 3: Construction on New Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium underway.¹¹

In addition to the notion that protection of Jackson students’ femininity from the ‘manliness’ of competition was necessary, the erection of the Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium offered a separate ‘womanly’ arena for female students to play sports, as well as continued the broader narrative of creating gender-defined spaces on the Tufts campus. For example, in a letter to the Civilian Production of Administration on March 22, 1947, President Carmichael wrote that “the erection of this new building would free the facilities now used in an emergency way in the

¹⁰ "Henry Clay Jackson Fund for Gymnasium to ‘Encurven’ Co-eds,” *Tufts Weekly*.

¹¹ Images from Tufts Facilities Records, “Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium,” pdf, 10.

men's gymnasium for more adequate use by the men students at Tufts College."¹² While lack of space made the donation of the gymnasium a vital problem-solver for Tufts, the insinuation that the men would make better use of Cousens Gymnasium provides some indication that, while Jackson women's sports were tolerated and even encouraged, they weren't held in the same consideration as the Tufts men's sports. Additionally, the idea that men and women also needed separate spaces as almost a reprieve from the opposite gender cannot be ignored. In *Looking Good: College Women and Body Image*, renowned author Margaret A. Lowe describes the phenomenon of having gendered spaces: "Separate environments were thought necessary both to preserve biological difference and to protect women from overworking to prove they could keep up with men."¹³ Maintaining and protecting the differences between men and women were prioritized more than recognizing the similarities between the Jackson and Tufts students.

Another distinguishing feature between Jackson and Tufts sports was how the purpose of athletics and competition for both was defined. For Tufts men, their sports represented pure competition and helped establish their manliness; it was more animalistic in that it was viewed as an essential facet of masculinity. For Jackson women, competition was downgraded and downplayed, and their sports were viewed as being fun and good for the students' health. President Carmichael seemed to cement this by stating that

"women's physical education work is closely tied in with the whole health program for women in our college, and I feel that it is absolutely essential that this new facility be made available as soon as possible for the welfare of this large segment of our undergraduates."¹⁴

¹² Letter to Civilian Production of Administration from Leonard Carmichael, Jackson Facilities Box, pdf, 47.

¹³ Margaret A. Lowe, *Looking Good: College Women and Body Image, 1875-1930*, Johns Hopkins pbk. ed. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 16.

¹⁴ Letter to Civilian Production of Administration from Leonard Carmichael, Jackson Facilities Box, pdf, 47.

Not only does he make no reference to the new gymnasium increasing the competitiveness or the success of the Jackson sports teams, but President Carmichael says ‘whole health program’ when referring to Jackson athletics. It appears that despite Jackson offering sports to female students, there is no actual Jackson athletic program or Jackson athletes according to the administration. In other words, Jackson girls play sports, but aren’t classified as athletes; Jackson offers several sports but, as a whole, they aren’t considered an athletic program. This again highlights the complex dynamic surrounding Jackson women and their sports on the Tufts campus, and is another narrative that adds to the overall story of the construction of the Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium.

To begin the actual construction of the Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium, on March 24, 1947, Tufts submitted an Application for Authority to Construct to the U.S. Office of Temporary Controls, Civilian Production Administration. Due to WW2, the quantity of resources like wood, steel, and other materials were carefully monitored to avoid any shortages that would impede the war effort, so any construction had to be submitted for approval. Part of this process included providing information such as the *Proposed Use of Project* and the *Justification for the Project*. Signed by President Carmichael, Tufts confirmed that the *use* of the new building was as a “gymnasium for students (female) offices, Medical examination rooms, showers, posture rooms, etc. and Gymnasium floor,” and that the *justification* was because “present facilities are house in a small, old wooden structure entirely inadequate. We have an increase in enrollment over our 1940 figures of 100%. Of these 1,725 are veterans.”¹⁵ President Carmichael’s *justification* for the new construction continues the narrative explored in prior paragraphs however, his explanation for the *use* of the project provides even greater detail towards what the new Henry Clay Jackson

¹⁵ Application for Authority to Construct, March 24, 1947, Jackson Facilities Records, pdf, 60-61.

Gymnasium would offer the Jackson students. According to the report, the new gymnasium would have an attached posture room, something not seen in Cousens Gymnasium. Meant to enhance femininity and to protect the ideals of womanhood at this time, the posture room further exacerbated the idea of gendered space on Tufts' campus and lead to further separation of gender overall. Once again a complex dynamic is at play, only this time in a more tangible way.

On October 9, 1947, the *Tufts Weekly* ran an article titled "Construction of New Jackson Gymnasium in Initial Phases" which announced more specific details of the project to the school community, such as the McCutcheon Company being chosen as the building firm (also the same company to complete Hamilton Pool), and revealed, "the architects of the new building are Louis W. Ross and Arland H. Dirlam, who graduate[d] from Tufts in the class of 1926."¹⁶ While the donation and subsequent plans to build the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium were revealed in a *Tufts Weekly* article in the fall of 1945, the 1947 article really provided the first big revelation of the project's details to the broader student body and began to add student voices to the ongoing narrative surrounding the new gymnasium. The student author (not named) of the article explained that "ever since the establishment of Jackson College, there has been a need for a suitable physical education plant for women on the Hill."¹⁷ This sentiment is largely parallel to President Carmichael's view and proves there was certainly agreement amongst the students and faculty towards the necessity of the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium for Jackson women.

While the students and the administration seemed to be on the same page regarding the need for the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium, there was at least one disagreement about the amount of information that was being shared about this new construction. An article titled

¹⁶ "Construction of New Jackson Gymnasium in Initial Phases," *Tufts Weekly*, October 9, 1947, Digital Collections and Archive Records, pdf, 1.

¹⁷ "Construction of New Jackson Gymnasium in Initial Phases," *Tufts Weekly*, pdf, 1.

“Inside Report” ran in the November 13th, 1947 edition of the *Tufts Weekly*, highlighting the paper’s disgruntlement at - what they explained to be - a lack of transparency and cooperation from the Tufts administration: “since the fall term one of our reporters has had a standing assignment to get the facts [on the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium], but the administration has refused to impart data.”¹⁸ While at the beginning of the project there seems to have been issues regarding information-sharing between Tufts administrators and students, there is no indication that this complaint was sustained throughout the entirety of the project. There was no follow-up or mention of this issue again, and several articles continued to be written about the Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium throughout the 1947-1948 school year. Additionally, in the *Tufts Weekly* published on January 22, 1948, the article “Ten Minutes with the Mayor” stated that “in closing, rumor has it that the Jackson Gym is going to be quite the streamlined structure. The general opinion is that it will have to be pretty good to keep up with the Jackson Women.”¹⁹ This is important as it shows the news of the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium was known and positively acknowledged by the surrounding neighborhood, under the leadership of the Mayor, as well as depicts the community’s support of this project.

Overall, the *Tufts Weekly* reported on Jackson sports and the women who played them in a variety of ways, whether it was to spotlight a schedule or game, end of year banquet honors, the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium, or more. For example, on January 15th, 1948, the article “Jackson Basketball” highlighted the start of the women’s basketball, swimming, and badminton seasons, and noted the success of a large turnout for these varsity teams. Additionally, “J.A.A. Banquet Honors Athletes” described the end-of-the-year banquet put on by the Jackson Athletic Association which was established in the early 20th century. The article recognizes the

¹⁸ “The Inside Report,” *Tufts Weekly*, November 13, 1947, Digital Collections and Archive Records, pdf, 34.

¹⁹ “Ten Minutes with the Mayor,” *Tufts Weekly*, January 22, 1948, Digital Collections and Archive Records, pdf, 70.

accomplishments of two Jackson seniors: “Dorothy Hoffman received a white blazer and Frances Barker was awarded a gold ‘J’ pin.”²⁰ This article exemplifies that it was important for Tufts men to acknowledge the triumphs of the Jackson women and to share them with the campus. However, even though Jackson sports were praised and given attention, they still seemed to exist on a tier lower than that of the men’s sports. Meaning, as good as the Jackson sports and their female players may have been, in the eyes of many on-campus they didn’t measure up to the Tufts male athletes.

While the tone of the articles was generally positive and showed support for the female sports teams, terms like “hoopettes” or “jumboettes” were used to describe the Jackson girls and there was generally only one article highlighting Jackson sports alongside nine other articles about Tufts’ men’s sports. Not only did the editors deem it necessary to define the Jackson sports players in feminine terms, but at times writers commented on the actual appearance of the female athletes. On January 15, 1948, in an article titled “Engineairs,” the author of the piece wrote, “rotating vector duty won’t be tough to take now that the Jackson basketball team is practicing in Cousens Gym in the evening.”²¹ This article provides no actual information about the Jackson basketball team, how they were performing or gave any credit to the female students on the team. Instead, it insinuates that because the Jackson women’s basketball team is using Cousens, the female players will serve as a distraction for male students.

²⁰ "J.A.A. Banquet Honors Athletes," *Tufts Weekly*, January 22, 1948, Digital Collections and Archive Records, pdf, 69.

²¹ "Engineairs," *Tufts Weekly*, January 15, 1948, Digital Collections and Archive Records, pdf, 62.

The Tufts men were not the only group on campus to refer to the Jackson women's appearances in connection to sports. In the *Tufts Weekly* on May 20th, 1948, when the cornerstone was laid for the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium, President Carmichael was quoted saying "that when the box would be opened one hundred years hence, it would be found that 'the Jackson girls of 1948 were prettier than their descendants.'"²² While President Carmichael meant his remark to be complimentary, it seems out-of-place given that the context of his speech was to commemorate the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium; what should have been a momentous occasion. Both articles represent again the complex dynamic the female athletes had to endure from both the Tufts administration and from their Tufts male counterparts, and demonstrates how appearance impacts the underlying narrative of the Jackson students at the time.



Image 4: President Carmichael, alongside other prominent Tufts and Jackson faculty, places hand upon cornerstone of the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium.²³

²² "Cornerstone for Jaxon Gym Laid," *Tufts Weekly*, May 20, 1948, Digital Collections and Archive Records, pdf, 145.

²³ Images from Tufts Facilities Records, "Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium," pdf, 12.

Completion

As the construction of the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium continued and neared completion, the McCutcheon Co. Builders provided a contract breakdown to Tufts on October 31, 1947. This included the list of materials being used and their costs. The total project was quoted at \$235,828, which was almost \$36,000 over the original donation amount.²⁴ While Tufts had committed to completing the construction even if costs exceeded the Paul Wilde Jackson Fund's initial donation of \$200,000, Tufts approached the Old Colony Trust Company, explained the increase in costs, and asked if up to an additional \$50,000 donation could be gifted.

Addressed to Mr. Robert Cutler, President of Old Colony Trust Company, the letter explained, "... we respectfully wish to request the Trustees of the Fund to consider the possibility that an additional appropriation of \$50,000 might be made from the Fund so that the entire building could be erected from monies provided by the Fund."²⁵ This interaction is interesting for two reasons, the first one being that the Old Colony Trust Company agreed to donate an additional \$50,000 on top of the \$200,000 they had already donated to Jackson in order to build the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium. Secondly, while Tufts was not wrong to ask that more money be donated, it does indicate some unwillingness to allocate College funds towards this project. If paying only a portion of the overall costs was undesirable to Tufts, would this project have happened without the original \$200,000 donation from the Paul Wilde Jackson Fund? While speculation may never yield a concrete answer, certain actions do provide some indication and it appears that the new gymnasium would not have been built, at least during this time, if solely dependent on Tufts funding.

²⁴ The McCutcheon Co. Builders - Contract Break Down, October 31, 1947, Jackson Facilities Records, pdf, 75.

²⁵ Letter to Mr. Robert Cutler, President of Old Colony Trust Company, December 18, 1946, Jackson Facilities Box, pdf, 35.

With the additional donation secured, the project continued and on December 15, 1947, Professor Van Johnson from the Department of Classics at Tufts sent the formal Latin inscription for the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium. The translated Latin inscription read: “This building, carefully and handsomely arranged for physically exercises and dedicated to women for the sake of their health, was planned as a memorial to Henry Clay Jackson and was erected with funds most amply provided through the generosity of Paul Wilde Jackson.”²⁶ This translation provides insight into the continued narrative that Jackson sports existed to cater to the health of the female participants, not to foster competition. Only through this lens did the Tufts administration justify Jackson sports. Additionally, it is interesting that a male faculty member from Tufts college wrote the inscription for the Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium and not a faculty member from Jackson College. Even if no one in the Jackson administration was as well-versed in Latin, it is worth noting that there did not seem to be any oversight from Jackson faculty on what the inscription would state. Even though the new gymnasium was donated to Jackson College and its female students, Tufts dictated and controlled the project.

In the fall of 1948, eight months after the inscription was finalized, “the Henry Clay Jackson Memorial Gymnasium for women was ready for use,” despite “many fluctuating costs and restrictions still imposed on materials.”²⁷ While the announcement of the new project received attention from the *Tufts Weekly* and, by proxy, amongst students, the completion of the Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium did not seem to have a grand unveiling. This may be due, in part, because even when the gymnasium was opened for use, there were still several underlying issues that needed fixing, such as some of the wood flooring hadn’t been laid properly, that could

²⁶ Letter to Dr. Carmichael from Van Johnson, Department of Classics at Tufts College, December 15, 1947, Jackson Facilities Records, pdf, 93.

²⁷ Miller, *Light on the hill: A history of Tufts College*, 652.

have stifled any initial response or reaction. In the months following the opening of the building, the remaining issues were resolved, but by this time the new gymnasium had been in use and it wasn't 'brand new' anymore. Administrators, however, took the resolved issues as an indication to set ground rules for the use of the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium. In February 1949, ten rules were introduced which included stipulations that "students, departmental and other clubs or groups shall not hold regular meetings in the Jackson Lounge," and, "if the kitchen and china are used, care must be taken to see that all items are cleaned and replaced in their proper places at the conclusion of the exercises..."²⁸ It is mundane that administrators would want to set rules for the use of the various spaces within the new gymnasium. However, having a kitchen - known as the 'heart of the home' - with full china sets, connected to a championship-size court seems to perpetuate the idea that female sports needed feminine reinforcement to offset the 'manliness' of competition.

This narrative continued even as the new Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium led to increased opportunities and attention for the women participating in Jackson Sports. For example, on September 29, 1949, *Tufts Weekly* ran an article titled "Jackson Girls Play Lacrosse" under a new, small section of the sports page labeled 'Jackson Sports'. This piece announced that "this fall, for the first time in its history, Jackson will be playing lacrosse. Girl's lacrosse is a far cry from the bloody Indian game. Actually, it is a greatly modified form of men's lacrosse."²⁹ This quote exemplifies the confusing and complicated dynamic of Jackson sports at Tufts. The first sentence highlights a new Jackson sport and therefore the expansion of athletic opportunity for female students, while the second and third serve only to define women's lacrosse by

²⁸ Suggested Rules for the Use of the Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium By Other Than Those Associated with Jackson Physical Education, February 1949, Jackson Facilities Records, pdf, 91.

²⁹ "Jackson Girls Play Lacrosse," *Tufts Weekly*, September 29, 1949, Jackson Sports, Digital Collections and Archive Records, pdf, 10.

comparing it to the men's game. This piece alludes that women's lacrosse isn't up-to-par with the modern men's lacrosse game of 1949 and, as lacrosse was - and continues to be - played by both sexes, there seemed to be a greater necessity to specify the limitations of the women's game relative to that of the men.



Image 5: Students stand on front steps of Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium.³⁰



Image 6: Event held in Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium on December 7th, 1951.³¹

³⁰ Images from Tufts Facilities Records, "Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium," pdf, 16.

³¹ Images from Tufts Facilities Records, "Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium," pdf, 14-15.

Conclusion

Jackson College was built upon the ideology that specific, gendered spaces were a necessity at a coeducational school. While celebrating its founding, President Hamilton

“assured both men and women that with the separate college there was ‘no longer any need to sacrifice the interests of either sex to those of the other, or to make any compromise between methods which seem necessarily diverse’.”³²

However, even having defined spaces on campus for the sexes did not fully alleviate the concerns pertaining to female students and their participation in sports. Due to the concern that increased competition would impact the femininity of female students, “physical education programs for female students, especially competitive athletics, developed more slowly at coeducational institutions than at women’s colleges.”³³ College women were able to participate in sports as long as the emphasis was on health, not on competition. As time went on, having separate spaces for men and women to participate in extracurricular activities, especially at co-educational schools, became imperative. The Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium allowed this narrative of having separately defined spaces for Jackson women and Tufts men to participate in their own sports (and to just to exist on campus), to continue. While separation further exacerbated the unequal consideration given to Jackson sports and women versus the Tufts men’s teams, the new gymnasium also gave Jackson women the increased opportunity to grow and build their athletic capabilities, especially in sports like Field Hockey where no Tufts men’s team existed for the women to be compared to.

³² Miller, *Light on the hill: A history of Tufts College*, 205.

³³ Lowe, *Looking Good*, 51.

Although it would take 20 more years for Title IX to be introduced and for a proliferation of female sports to occur, buildings like the Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium were significant in giving female students space to explore sports and engage in limited competition and served as a catalyst for the eventual increased recognition of female athletes and sports. As a member of the Tufts University Field Hockey Program from 2017 to 2021, I certainly credit the construction of the Henry Clay Jackson Gymnasium as part of the foundation that all current Tufts female student-athletes and sports teams stand upon today.

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