A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY IN WYOMING VALLEY

The Pennsylvania State College has long been an educational factor in Wyoming Valley. In the beginning, it tried to meet the educational needs of the people of this area just as it is now trying to educate men and women to serve in local, state, and national industry. Because of the emphasis on practicality, the courses taught have varied to fit the needs of the area although stress has always been on engineering curricula.

In 1916 a group of local citizens who were Penn State graduates asked the College to begin an extension school in Wilkes-Barre. As a result, members of the engineering faculty from State College came to this area to investage the need for such a school. Through the Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club, arrangements were made for several classes to begin. Prospective students were interviewed by Norman C. Miller of State College in the local Chamber of Commerce offices.

The school was explained by Dean R. L. Sackett of Penn State. The purpose of the course according to Dean Sackett was to give individuals without opportunity to attend college a chance to improve themselves. The College would provide proper instructors and books; and the subjects covered would be in mechanical, civil, and electrical engineering, taught from a practical point of view. The Engineering Extension Division cooperated with local authorities in finding a suitable location for holding the classes which would meet once a week for twenty weeks.

The subjects taught in 1916 were advanced mathematics, surveying, reinforced concrete, and mechanics. The mathematics course would include a study of algebra, geometry, and trigonometry in relation to surveying problems. The surveying course would concentrate, in the first half-year, on instruments and their uses; in the second half of the year, the group would be divided into two; one group would practice mine surveying; the other, railroad surveying. The course in reinforced concrete, including its composition, its action, and its economics, would be studied after the basic mathematics and mechanics were learned. The mechanics course would, therefore, stress such things as stability, roofs, bridges, etc., in relation to the courses to be given in concrete. All courses would be taught by the instructors who had had experience in the field.

The 1948 surveying class

The members of the State College team who came to Wilkes-Barre were surprised at the great demand for such courses in this area. Dean Sackett stated that the instructor would be in Wilkes-Barre on a part time basis (three days a week), but he hoped that the state would, by the following year, provide sufficient funds to install a full time instructor here. He said, "You may therefore look forward to an unusual development here in Wilkes-Barre if the present indications are sufficient ground upon which to count."

Dean Sackett had a sound basis for his prediction. During the week of registration, approximately 150 students enrolled to take a variety of courses. Subjects drawing the heaviest enrollment in 1916 were mathematics, surveying, and mechanics. The classes, which began on November 7, were held in Wilkes-Barre High School Building on North Washington Street, the same build- that is now called Coughlin.

On October 26, Dr. Edwin E. Sparks, President of the Pennsylvania State College, came to Wilkes-Barre to open the classes formally. The meeting was held in the YMCA auditorium, and a large group of students and the general public attended his talk.

One other interesting news item that concerned Penn State occurred in October of 1916 although it had nothing to do with the beginning of the Engineering Extension School. On the nineteenth, members of the senior class from State College who where en route to Chicago for judging in a horse show, came to Wilkes-Barre. They were taken to Hayfield Farm "where they inspected the handsome Clyesdale horses." Little did they suspect that fifty years later part of Hayfield Farm would become the nucleus of a permanent campus for the Engineering School that was begun here in the same year.

The process of setting up the Extension School was the same throughout the followning years. Representatives of the College would come to Wilkes-Barre, interview prospective students, and establish classes for which a demand existed. The registration took place in the offices of the Chamber of Commerce, and classes were held in what was called the New High School Building on North Washington Street in Wilkes-Barre.

In 1920, in addition to the Extension School, a course under the direction of Professor George W. Davis of Penn State was conducted to train industrial teachers in the city. The course was tuition free since expenses were borne by state and federal funds under the Smith-Hughes Act of February 1917.

In 1921, courses were offered in Mining, Electrical, Mechanical, and Industrial Engineering. By 1922, because of increased interest shown in the area, the program was enlarged: three-year courses were offered in Mechanical, Electrical, Civil, and Mining Engineering. Professor R. H. Spahr represented Penn State, and Mr. E. G. Gealy of the Lehigh Valley Coal Company was the local supervisor. It was the first time that such a three-year course in engineering was attempted in the state. Professor Spahr reported that the classes were over-flowing. Wilkes-Barre had the only Engineering Extension School in this section of the state. The classes extended over twenty-four weeks, divided into two terms. The subjects taught were expanded to inculde such things as mine pumps, mine law, heat, steam, machine design, electric power, etc.

In 1923, Mr. M. A. Chaffee of the Lehigh Valley Coal Company, who had previously been the part time instructor with the Extension School, was assigned to full time instruction for the year's term. The courses remained the same except that special provision was made for giving college credit in individual subjects.

The process of setting up classes each fall remained relatively the same since the four curricula offered were well established by this time. However, the number of students enrolling had increased, for it was reported in 1925 that "The work during the past few years has so increased that Mr. M. A. Chaffee of Kingston, who is the Supervisor of Organization of these schools, has with him this year two assistants, Mr. E. N. Montague and Mr. D. C. Bratton, both Penn State graduates from the Department of Civil Engineering." Classes were held Monday evenings in the Wilkes-Barre High School.

By 1926, the work had so expanded that the Penn State Department of Engineering Extension was recognized as the leader in engineering extension work by the National University Extensions Association. Classes and subject were the same as in preceding years.

The sixteenth session of the school, in 1931, was organized by Mr. N. A. Hedden who distributed literature concerning the school to local industries and collieries. The industrial leaders of the community were cooperative and enthusiastic about the Extension School. It was announced in this year that people interested in other courses not offered (including cultural courses) should request them.

By 1932, Mr. O. E. Kenworthy, an Electrical Engineer for Lehigh Valley Coal Company, had been in charge of the Branch Evening School for several years. Under his leadership, the enrollment of the school had grown each year to the "high position it now holds in the educational fiield in this valley." by this time a course in Aeronautical Engineering had been established.

In 1933, such subjects as hydraulics, theory of aeronautics, strength of materials, DC and AC current, and surveying were offered. Mr. Kenworthy made the comment:

"During the past seventeen years several thousand young men of Wilkes-Barre and the valley have taken advantage of the opportunity offered by the evening school to improve themselves. Many of these men studied at night while employed during the day and as a result quite a few are holding responsible positions. The courses offered are practical and within the financial means of all who desire them as state funds appropriated for this purpose reduce the tuition for full year's course to only thirty dollars. This year, for the first time, a partial payment plan has been made available whereby students can pay the tuition on a monthly basis. Those who can pay in full are allowed a ten percent discount.

The faculty was expanded to seven members; and the students, electing class officers, organized many activities such as basketball, social functions, and a commencement banquet.

In 1934, an other addition, Textile Engineering, was placed on the list of courses offered by the Branch School. The courses were of advantage to men and women working in local silk mills who were in search of a chance to advance. Some of the subjects taught were textile and silk design, looms and loom fixing, analysis of yarn calculations, and plain and lox loom machinery.

In 1936, Mr. J. Harry May became Administrative Head, and the name of the school was changed to The Pennsylvania State College Wilkes-Barre Technical School Center. Three-year courses were offered in Aeronautical, Civil, Electrical, Mechanical, and Textile Engineering. Registration followed the pattern established in 1916 of using the offices of the Chamber of Commerce. Classes were held in the same building as before, but the name had been changed to Coughlin High School by this time. No college credit was given except for specially arranged courses in trigonometry and mechanical drawing. However, certificates were awarded to students who successfully concluded subjects; and diplomas, carrying industrial credit, were granted to students who had successfully completed the three-year courses.

By 1938, new equipment had been installed and a course in Air-Conditioning had been instituted. Classes ran for thirty weeks and met two evenings each week at Coughlin. Some subjects that were taught included thermodynamics, internal combustion engines, and business and technical writing.

"Curricula Made Ready to Meet Modern Industry" was a *Sunday Independent* headline on August 27, 1939. Mr. J. Harry May made the comment, "Many of the more prominent industrialists in the Wilkes-Barre area received their first formal training in engineering from courses pursued at this school." More emphasis was being placed on mathematics and mechanical drawing because "these subjects lay better educational foundations for any work the student may find as a result of this training." Wilkes-Barre at this time was one of five such technical schools in the state maintained by Penn State. The enrollment had reached 135.

By 1940, there were five organized curricula. A one-year course in Aeronautical Engineering was taught to prepare students for taking the goverment written examination for pilots' licenses. A two-year course in Air-Conditioning was offered; and the three three-year courses — Civil, Electrical, and Mechanical Engineering — which had been so well established were given.

"To meet the needs of industry is one of our primary aims," Mr. May stated. In order to do this, new subjects were constantly being added; old ones, no longer filling a need, were dropped. In 1940, three new courses were offered: architectural drawing, plan reading, and estimating. In addition, Extension School students had the advantage of using physical apparatus and machinery in laboratories in mechanics, DC and AC electricity, kinematics, and surveying. Students from this area also made week end trips to State College to use the laboratory facilities there.

During the war years, the Extension School, in cooperation with the United States Office of Education and the United States Office of Production, sponsored courses to train women and older men to replace the younger men who were drafted. In 1942, Penn State opened its sixth series of such government-sponsored courses. The tuition was free and twenty-seven subjects were offered. These courses were taught on a college level but for no college credit. The "In-Service" courses were given to train workers already in war production to take over more highly skilled jobs. The "Pre-Employment" courses were planned to train workers to go into war production. Many women of this area took these courses to help the country in its production of war materials. Many new subjects were included such as corporation and manufacturing accounting, elements

of radio communications, ordnance inspection, and personnel management. It was reported that for one course 1000 people tried to enroll. The instructor had to stand on the desk and shout for the people to go home. Certificates of Completion were awarded to students who fulfilled the requirements.

In 1945, eleven courses for mining men were opened. They were to prepare men for greater opportunities in the coal industry. Sponsored by the school districts, the courses were conducted under the joint direction of The Pennsylvania State College Extension Services and the State Department of Mines. Mr. R. B. Hewes of Penn State was in charge.

In 1946, after the war, the Wyoming Valley Evening Technical Institute of The Pennsylvania State College, as the Extension School, was then called, got back to a somewhat normal operation. However, overflowing classes posed a problem for Mr. Victor F. Baiz, Administrative Head. Courses were offered in Building Construction, Surveying and Construction, Heat, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning, and Industrial Electricity. Classes met two evenings a week for sixteen-week terms. The faculty consisted of sixteen instructors who came from various local industries to teach these overcrowded evening classes.

In 1947, another big step was taken by the Pennsylvania State College Wyoming Valley Technical Institute: it began three day courses. Because of the insistence of the returning veterans for an education, the evening school could not handle the great number of prospective students. In addition, the veterans wanted their education more rapidly than they could get it by taking evening courses.

For these reasons, The Wyoming Valley Day Technical Institute was begun. David E. Bradbury, who was appointed Administrative Head of the Day Institute, annouced that instruction in three one-year courses in Building Construction, Industrial Electricity, and Mechanical and Production Tool Design would be provided. In addition, instruction was given in techincal writing and speaking.

Mr. Harry W. Montz, a man who had been instrumental in getting Penn State here in 1916, was serving as chairman of the local Advisory Committee for the Penn State Extension Services. He announced that the one-year program was equivalent to five years of evening school.

The course in Building Construction, Mr. Montz said, was designed to prepare men for jobs on structural design, the mechanical equipping of buildings, surveying for building layout, business and construction contracts, and sufficient general knowledge to equip the student who plans eventually to operate his own construction company.

The Industrial Electricity curriculum trained students for positions as electrical technicians who install, operate, and maintain electrical equipment, do electrical estimating, write specifications, make electrical surveys for buildings to recommend the installation of the necessary equipment. At the completion of the course the student had a solid foundation of basic knowledge in the principles of electricity and its uses in industry, particularly from the standpoint of power and machinery.

Students who completed the course in Mechanical and Production Tool Design were qualified to make studies of the requirements and specification for machine parts and to make the proper designs and drawings for the fabrication of those parts. Students were also prepared for many other positions concerned with the design and drawings of manufacturing tools. Advanced courses provided knowledge of machine layout design.

The evening classes continued under the direction of Mr. Victor F. Baiz. The courses offered were the same as had previously been given; that is, subjects were taught for which a demand existed.

Both Day and Evening School were divided into two semesters which were completed on June 3 of 1948. The first group of graduates consisted of 107 men. It is somewhat surprising to find the student body so active in self-government and social affairs as these men were.

It would appear, from newspaper accounts, that the men not only received excellent training in their particular curriculum, but that they also had time to enjoy themselves while getting that training.

1947-48 student officers

The news releases for that year state that the Day classes were to be held in the "newly renovated" Coughlin Annex. However, it was found from speaking with men who taught there that first year that even though "newly renovated," the Coughlin Annex was not the most desirable place to hold classes. There are at present only two men still with the Center from the original faculty: Mr. George W. Bierly, now the Administrative Head of the Center; and Stephen Bendick, now with the Mechanical Engineering Department.

The "modern" student lounge in the Coughlin Annex

On September 23, 1948, the Wyoming Valley Evening Technical Institute opened for the thirty-second consecutive year. Classes were formed in Building Construction, Business Administration, and Industrial Electricity. The classes, of course, were approved by the Veterans Administration under the "On-the-Job-Training" provisions of the GI Bill of Rights.

The Day Technical Institute in 1948 added one new course, Business Administration. All the courses were practical and concentrated in material offered. Men in the Business Administration course were trained to become cashiers, audit clerks, cost clerks, bookkeepers, salesmen, advertising assistants, assistant buyers, assistant managers, and other positions that led to positions of executive responsibility. Another interesting short course was offered for six weeks in February 1949. The course was Fly Tying and Angling Techniques.

Of more significance, however, is the fact that The Wyoming Valley Day Technical Institute was the first school of its type to be opened by the College. Since it had proved so successful in 1947-48, five similar schools were opened in 1948 in various parts of the state.

On July 1, 1948, Mr. George W. Bierly was appointed Administrative Head of the Day School. To that time he had been teaching in the general curricula of engineering and building construction. He has remained in that position to the present time, guiding the Day program.

The 1949-50 school year followed the pattern set in 1947. Additional courses were given when demand existed for them. One new course was given for eighteen men of the Wilkes-Barre Transit Corporation at the request of the Corporation; another new course was given in credits and collection for men and women who worked in credit departments of stores and industries.

The most significant event in the 1949 term was the accreditation of all three curricula. The Engineers' Council for Professional Development, which encourages the growth of top-flight technical institutes in the United States, made formal recognition of the engineering courses taught at the Institute. The Penn State Center was visited by a committee of engineers from the ECPD. According to a report received from that committee, the Institute met the ECPD's standards, and was, therefore, listed among the nations' accredited institutions for the teaching of engineering curricula on the technical level. The Wilkes-Barre Center remains one of only a few institutions in the East so accredited to teach the engineering curricula.

For the 1950-51 school year, The Extension School moved to the Guthrie Building on North Washington Street where it is still located. At that time, it took over only part of the building, using the first floor for lecture rooms and the fourth floor for laboratories. It was said to be an

improvement over the Coughlin Annex; but even after Guthrie had been renovated over succeeding years, it still does not seem to correspond in atmosphere to the modern subjects being taught today.

Guthrie Building before renovation

The evening school again offered new special courses such as advanced psychology of adjustment and mental hygene, principles of motor control, etc., as well as keeping up its offerings in the three-year courses previously noted.

The one-year day program and the three-year evening program progressed steadily through the next few years. The courses remained the same although through the evening school special courses were set up for intested groups. The idea of meeting the constantly changing educational needs of the area has ever been uppermost in the course planning at the Penn State Center. Also, by this time, a placement service had been established and was functioning well. It was common that from 90 to 100 percent of the students were placed in positions for which they had been trained by the Center. This service continues to the present.

The constant preparation for the future led to the announcement on February 22, 1953, of the introduction of two new courses slated for the fall semester. The courses were to cover a two-year period, leading to a Penn State Extension diploma, preparing graduates to perform a variety of jobs on the technician or associate engineering level. The courses, Drafting and Design Technology, and Electrical Technology, were developed by the School of Engineering at Penn State following reminders from industry that the supply of graduate engineers was inadequate and that the need for associate engineers was becomeven more acute since they are needed to relieve graduate engineers of many non-creative assignments.

Typical engineering drafting room in Guthrie

The 1953-54 school term, then, was the beginning of the present two-year programs which lead to an Associate Degree in Engineering. The degree for recognition of successful completion of the two-year courses was first announced on May 23, 1954. The University, for the first time in its history,was to award the Degree of Associate in Engineering.

The first students of the two-year program to receive the degree were graduated on June 11, 1955. There were 39 in the class. In order to improve instruction during the school year of 1954-55, much new laboratory equipment was brought to Wilkes-Barre from the main campus. The evening school operated as usual, opening on September 27. A new management development program to train management personnel was instituted. There was also a special ten-week course in drafting.

The 1956 graduating class consisted of forty-two students who received the Associate Degree; the 1957 class graduated the same number. However, in 1957 the freshman class increased to 111 members, the largest to enroll at this point. Also, on January 30, 1957, the Advisory Board approved the two-year Surveying Technology course to begin in the fall of that year. Wilkes-Barre was the only Center, of twelve in the state, to offer the course. Equipment valued at twenty thousand dollars was purchased to get the two-year program under way. It is interesting to note that surveying was one of the first courses offerer by Penn State in this area in 1916. On April 17 of that year, announcement was made of a $450

scholarship by Dorr-Oliver, Incorporated. This scholarship has been granted each succeeding year to the present.

There was talk of expanding the night school facilities and program in 1957, "to meet the nation's growing educational needs." In order to expand, however, several steps were necessary. Industry would have to accept partial responsibility for furnishing qualified instructors. Students would have to be more carefully screened, and new methods of teaching would have to be used.

As can be seen throughout this brief history, the Pennsylvania State University never had a permanent location in the Valley. In 1957, the University tried to remedy this situation by offering to buy the Guthrie Building from the Wilkes-Barre School Board. However, because of loud protests by residents of the area, the Board made no decision about selling the building so it was once again leased to the University.

The Guthrie Building today

Guthrie's parking lot

In the fall of 1957, 122 freshmen enrolled in the three two-year courses. The evening school continued its four programs of study. A survey taken of the Center graduates showed that they were well-satisfied with the education they received and the jobs they got as a result of their two-years of specialized training. The 1957 class also saw the first girl enrolled for the engineering courses. Immaculata Comitz went on to graduate in 1959 and to work in engineering fields. Sixty-five students, earning the Associate Degree, were graduated on June 7, 1958. The evening school graduated ten.

The next few years saw much the same type of program followed as had been established when the two-year programs were put into operation. The Center could not expand since it had not the physical facilities to do so. In 1962, there was talk of consolidating Wilkes-Barre and Scranton centers in order to provide for the greatly needed expansion. However, industrial and civic leaders opposed the idea of Penn State's leaving Wilkes-Barre. Mr. R. Nelson Myers, Chapter President of the Professional Engineers of Luzerne County, wrote in a letter to Dr. Eric Walker, President of The Pennsylvania State University: "The students from the Wilkes-Barre Center have filled a niche in the struggle for diversified industry in our valley that could not other-wise have been met." As a result of what appeared to be much interest on the part of the community, it was announced in September of 1963 that the Wilkes-Barre Center would remain at the Guthrie Building.

In 1964, in keeping with the purpose of staying abreast of new developments, the Surveying Department gained national recognition for its nearly unique course in photogrammetry. In this same year, however, difficulties arose over the renewal lease of Guthrie to the Center. The decision was reached that Penn State could lease the building for one more year. Local civic leaders and educators felt "any thought of raising a question that could result in the loss of this fine educational institution is hard to understand."

It was on December 5, 1964, that the public announcement was made concerning the one million dollar gift to the University by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Robinson. Hayfield House, the former residence of Mr. and Mrs. John Conyngham, was given to the University to be developed into a permanent campus for the Center. This

fifty-room mansion with its surrounding grounds could be developed into one of the most beautiful of the University's Centers. The gift opened the way for expansion of the University in this area.

At the close of this first half-century of Penn State in Wyoming Valley, it is interesting to note the great potential that lies ahead for the University's offering of educational services to the people of the local communities. With a permanent home that can be developed and with room to expand, the Center is already preparing new and more diversified courses to meet the educational needs of today and tomorrow.