

Were You There?

THE EVOLUTION OF A COLLEGE CAMPUS



A retrospective of photos and artifacts from Pennsylvania College of Technology, Williamsport Area Community College, Williamsport Technical Institute and Williamsport Area School District, exhibited by The Gallery at Penn College in 2009.

Countdown to the Centennial
1914  2014

Alumni of W.T.I., including William Sober (Class of 1950), note the names of dignitaries they recognize in an archive photo.



I miss the good old days at WACC.
- Patty Burns 1971



This college has transformed over the years. It's amazing. So far my time at PCT has been the best time of my life.
- Gerianne Tomb



Were You There? The Evolution of a College Campus – a collection of photographs and artifacts from the archives of Pennsylvania College of Technology – was exhibited October 6 – November 8, 2009, in The Gallery, at Penn College in Madigan Library.

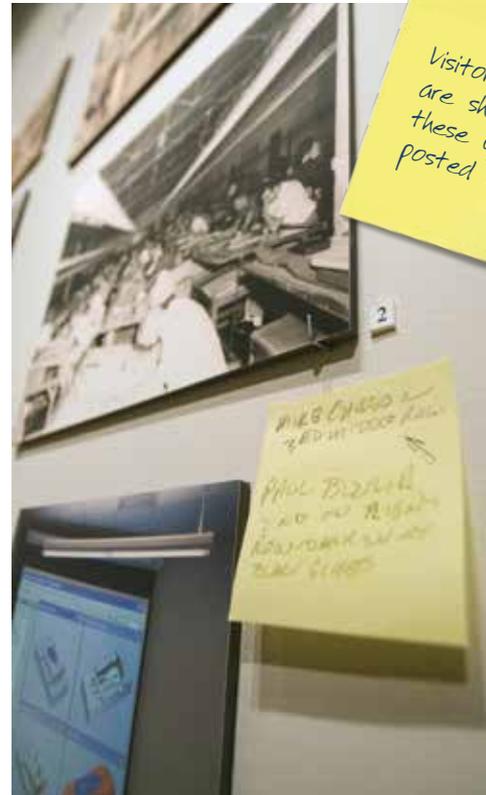
The exhibit took viewers on a journey through the institution's rich history, from the inception of adult classes at the Williamsport High School in 1914, through its evolution into Williamsport Technical Institute, Williamsport Area Community College and present-day Penn College.

Images depicted the many aspects of campus life that have remained constant through time, while providing a glimpse of people, places, and events long relegated to the annals of history.

This commemorative booklet features the images exhibited in the retrospective. It also shares comments from visitors and the individuals who helped to gather the images and information used to create the historical display.

This booklet is the first in a series of publications marking the Countdown to the Centennial, a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the institution that will take place in 2014.

For more information, visit www.pct.edu/centennial online or contact the College Information and Community Relations Office at cicr@pct.edu or (570) 320-2400, ext. 7253.



Visitors to the retrospective exhibit were invited to share their thoughts using yellow, posted notes. Many of these have been included in this publication.

You can post your thoughts on the exhibit and this publication – as well as your memories of the institution – online at www.pct.edu/centennial.

Were You There? The Evolution of a College Campus began with an idea to develop a pictorial history of the institution, in celebration of the 20th anniversary of Pennsylvania College of Technology. Looking back on the process, it is probably best that we didn't know the monumental scope of work—the task of sifting and sorting through thousands of images—that would be involved in bringing this exhibit to fruition.

With the assistance of a group of College retirees, we began looking through the oldest photographs in the college archives. Out of 700 photographs, we identified 75 images from the Williamsport Technical Institute and its precursor institution as a working basis for our exhibit. We then moved into the Williamsport Area Community College and the Penn College collections. While the number of images from W.T.I. was manageable, the combined images from W.A.C.C. and Penn College numbered in the thousands and also included negatives and slides.

New images were selected to correlate to the 75 old images; together they revealed a theme of “then and now.” This type of comparison would visually illustrate the growth of the institution, and would apply well to three sections of the exhibit: programs, buildings, and campus life. Another key component of the exhibit became the timeline of historic events. We devoted a great deal of effort to developing this decade-by-decade history using a combination of text and photographs.

After months of making preliminary selections, it took many more months to examine each image, verify the accompanying identification, if any existed, and make final decisions. In consultation with our retiree committee, as well as the deans of the academic schools and various faculty and staff, we were able to affix a story to the images...and what a story it was!

When the exhibit opened, we were thrilled by the reaction of the attendees. Many W.T.I. alumni had stories to share, along with many laughs and a few tears. The W.A.C.C. alumni were quite adept at identifying people and images that were still unknown. Many current Penn College students were astounded and unaware of their college's long and varied history. We believe all who viewed it learned something new and walked away with a sense of pride for the institution.

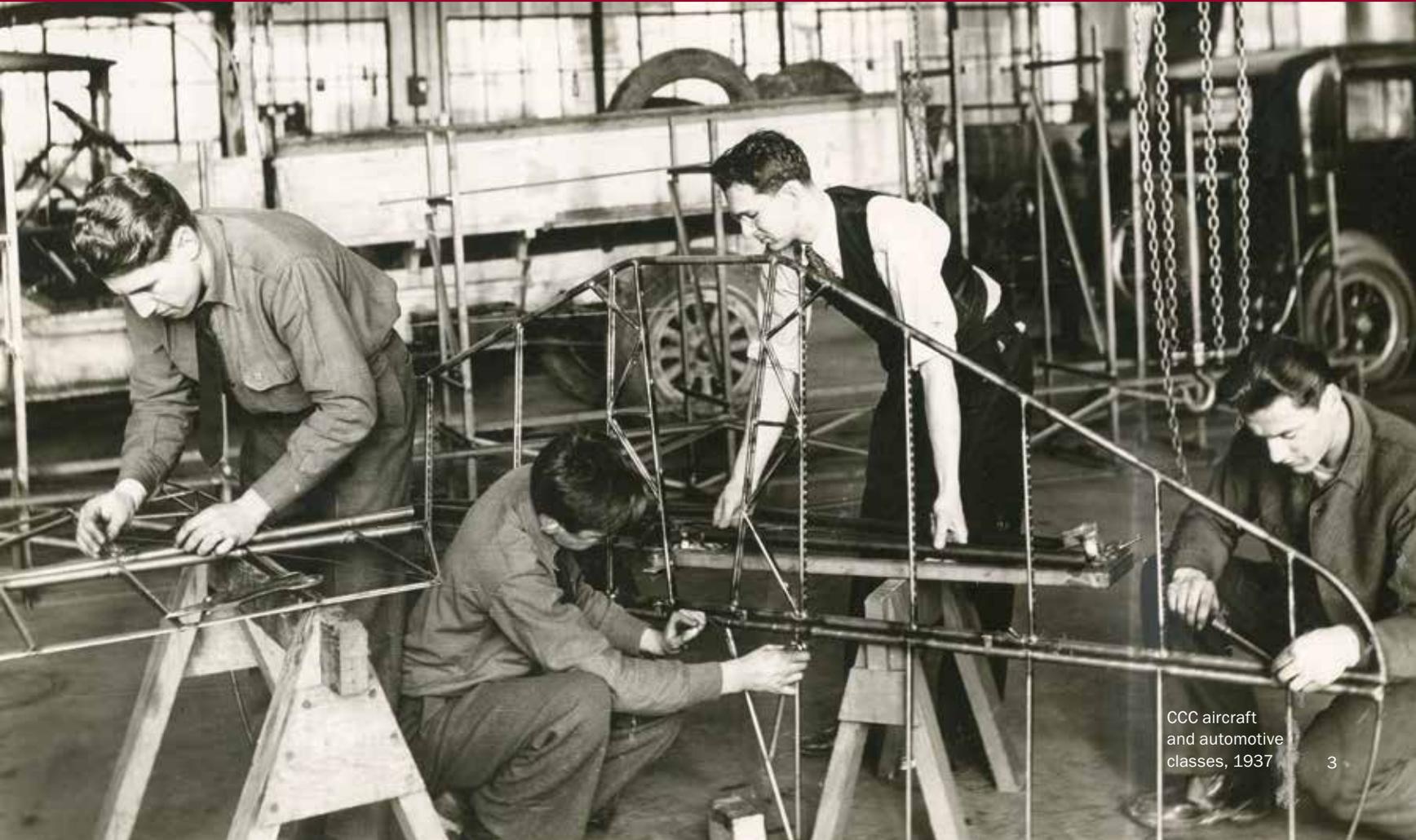
We are grateful for this publication, so that the hard work of many can be preserved for a lifetime.

Lenore Penfield, *Gallery Director*

Penny Lutz, *Gallery Assistant*

Continue the experience online at
www.pct.edu/centennial

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS THROUGH THE DECADES



CCC aircraft
and automotive
classes, 1937



Faculty and staff, 1965



Go online to identify people in this photograph.
www.pct.edu/centennial

1914

The first Williamsport High School building burns down and a new high school opens with a small industrial arts shop, the first of its kind in the state. Adult education classes in woodworking and machine shop are offered. Because local lumber and woodworking industries are in a boom period, woodworking is the most popular course offered through 1920.

This building was the high school through 1912-1971. The first graduating class of the new high school was 1972.

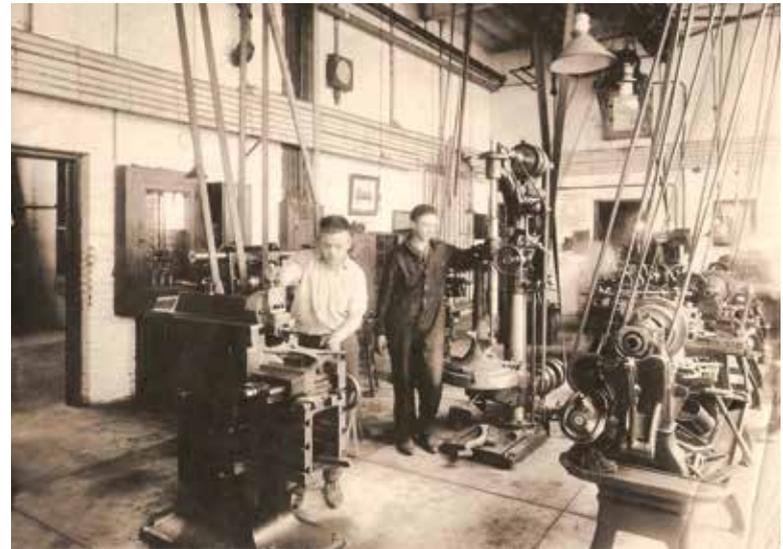
Introduction to the Williamsport High School dedication book, 1914: *The Williamsport High School Building, beautiful and majestic as it is, was not erected for the purpose of making real the dream of the man who has the honor of being the architect nor as a monument to the men who have given so much time and thought to its construction. Its purpose is rather to be found in the unrestricted opportunity which it offers for the development of the future citizens of the community. It marks a step in the onward march of progress in education and should contribute to the eternal well-being of all who enter its doors.*



Williamsport High School building

1919

A veteran training school is established by the high school vocational department to train disabled war veterans.



▲ The first machine shop



Student punches the time clock to record his hours of instruction.

- 1920s** A cooperative work-study industrial course for students over 16 years of age begins. By the end of the decade, 48 local companies would use co-op students.
- 1920** A full-time vocational education adult day school and an evening industrial school are established. Pattern making, automotive, carpentry and electrical courses are added to the curriculum. Part-time vocational educational training is provided for Williamsport High School students. Dr. George Parkes is named director of the industrial education programs.
- 1926** A unique community foremanship program begins to meet the rising demand for supervisors. In the first four years, 20 industries and 150 foremen would participate. This marks the beginning of vocational foremanship, and industrial leaders begin to regard the school as a community asset as the program brings a dollar value to the industry and improves supervisory practices.

c. 1930 The Williamsport Chamber of Commerce takes a manpower survey of local industry. It reveals that although unemployment continues to rise, there is a concurrent increase in the shortage of skilled workers. Williamsport High School is chosen to design a program to retrain the unemployed. In cooperation with several agencies, a plan is developed to screen, train and place unemployed workers. The methods of the Williamsport retraining school are so successful that the plan becomes famous across the country as “The Williamsport Plan.”

In 1940, *The Saturday Evening Post* publishes an article featuring “The Williamsport Plan.” *“On the local level, down where the jobs and the jobless are, a movement is developing which, if it does not solve the unemployment problem, is due to make a sizable dent in it. What they aim to do is to train the jobless into the jobs.”*

High, Stanley “They Build Men into Jobs.”
The Saturday Evening Post, April 27, 1940, 24-87.



An automotive student works on a 1920's Buick at the George C. Myers & Brothers Garage, 1920's.

◀ Dr. George H. Parkes authored the employment report that gained national acclaim as “The Williamsport Plan.”



W.T.I. automotive vocational program for unemployed truck drivers

1932 A shortage of truck drivers is revealed by the 1930 manpower survey. Williamsport High School borrows trucks for evening use from Susquehanna Supply Company, and begins one of the first courses for truck drivers in the country. Out of this program grows a passenger automobile driving course, which is offered to both adults and high school students.

Do you have stories or photos regarding CCC, NYA and WPA training activities at Williamsport High School?

Please share your information online.
www.pct.edu/centennial

1933 The success of the vocational training program leads to training for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and National Youth Administration (NYA), agencies administered by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The CCC was conceived chiefly as a forestry labor camp, and many camps are located in the areas surrounding Williamsport due to the heavily forested public lands. The camps soon seek educational services, and men begin to attend the school for eight hours of adult retraining every Saturday. The NYA is a comprehensive educational and youth service, mainly focused on youth who failed in a regular school program. The NYA has an experimental residential youth center in South Williamsport, and these young men and women are enrolled in one year of educational retraining. The WPA provides some instructors for these programs, which continue in operation until 1943.

1933-34 The cabinet, machine and electric shops are constructed by men from local emergency relief programs and the Work Relief Agency (forerunner of WPA), with Dr. Parkes, director of the industrial education program, acting as building contractor.

1937 A new gymnasium, built by the WPA, is dedicated in November. The old gymnasium in the basement of the high school building becomes the center of adult education.

1940 On May 21 (11 days after the Nazis invaded Holland and Belgium), the Board of Directors of Williamsport School District establish a special Emergency Training Commission to adapt the vocational program to meet the defense needs of the country.

The focus of the school swiftly changes from retraining the unemployed to long term training of highly skilled workers for the metal working industries. On June 14, the training program for defense industries begins to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Since the school is one of the first in the country to adapt an existing vocational program to war needs, a pamphlet is produced by the Emergency Training Commission. In the forward to Vocational Training for Defense, Dr. Parkes writes, *“This folder has been prepared to present our plans for emergency training to our coworkers in other communities in the hope that a free exchange of ideas will assist in the next step in our National program of vocational education.”*



▲ Aerial view of the shop buildings



Was always in a rush to get from the gym to my next class - loved WHS! Harry Waltz, Class of 1959

It was cool to see the history of my school. I learned many things I would have never known. - Justin Weaver

Historical Highlights through the Decades

Were You There?

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Net proceeds from the sale of *Were You There? The Evolution of a College Campus* will become permanently restricted funds that will be invested to create income used for annual scholarship awards from the Penn College Endowed Alumni Scholarship.

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