

LEGACY *of* LEADERS



Centennial

1914  2014

Pennsylvania College of Technology

FORMERLY

Williamsport Area Community College

Williamsport Technical Institute

Williamsport Area School District Adult Education



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....3

Dr. George H. Parkes5

Dr. Kenneth E. Carl21

Dr. C. Herschel Jones37

Dr. William H. Feddersen 43

Dr. David M. Heiney..... 63

Dr. Robert L. Breuder71

 Master Teachers..... 79

Dr. Davie Jane Gilmour.....91

 Student Government
 Association Presidents 114

 Distinguished Alumni
 Award Recipients 115

Conclusion.....117



In Williamsport, the “lumber capital of the world,” rich lumber barons built homes along “Millionaires’ Row.”



The first industrial arts shop of its kind in Pennsylvania was part of the new Williamsport High School in 1914.



Opportunities in local lumber and wood industries made woodworking the school’s most popular shop course.

1914

Woodworking and lumber industries were booming along the Susquehanna River in Williamsport, Pa.

Known in the late 19th century as “The Lumber Capital of the World,” Williamsport was home to more millionaires, per capita, than any other city. Rich lumber barons built ornate Victorian-style mansions north of the river along a thoroughfare that became known as “Millionaires’ Row.”

Just around the corner, a small industrial arts shop, believed to be the first of its kind in the state, opened in the new Williamsport High School. The shop not only offered a place for high school students to learn woodworking and machining, it was also home to an adult education program that helped local residents, including World War I veterans, gain skills in order to secure jobs with area manufacturers.

Over the next century, leaders would rise from the halls of this neoclassical structure built to educate Williamsport’s youth. They were visionaries who not only influenced local students, but also earned national acclaim for bold experimentation in forging lasting connections between education, government, and industry.

This publication – developed as part of the Countdown to the Centennial marking 100 years of education at the historic site now known as Klump Academic Center on the campus of Pennsylvania College of Technology – honors the legacy of the leaders who made a difference in Williamsport and around the world.



DR. GEORGE H. PARKES

1895-1983

Williamsport High School
Faculty and vocational program director (1920-41)

Williamsport Technical Institute
Founding director (1941-52)

“Every man had a little of St. George in him ... If you want to get along with people put them in a position to slay a dragon every day.”

Dr. George H. Parkes was a practical dreamer. A son of English immigrants, he admired the land's patron, St. George the dragon slayer, and doggedly pursued opportunities – from corporate boardrooms to city junkyards – to enrich a fledgling educational program dedicated to the working class.

Later hailed as a “mechanic with a Ph.D.,” he entered the field of education in 1920, armed with a degree in mechanical engineering and experience as a railroad mechanic.

While Parkes was a student at Purdue University, Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith-Hughes Act – the first legislation to provide federal funding and oversight for vocational education. Eager to be part of a new trend in education, Parkes became one of the first college graduates in the nation to earn a full vocational education certification.

After graduation, Parkes returned to his Altoona hometown and to his job with the Pennsylvania Railroad. Determined to pursue a career at what he considered “one of the best schools for industrial arts in the state,” he asked the railroad to transfer him to Williamsport. This would allow him to keep his job while seeking a position at Williamsport High School, where he wanted to work under a pioneer in industrial education, William K. Yocum.

In 1920, Yocum hired Parkes to teach mechanical drafting; four years later, Parkes followed his mentor into the director's position. The program then offered training related to the area's primary industries – woodworking, patternmaking, cabinetmaking, machining, and drafting.

“It is rather remarkable, the sophistication of that program,” Parkes later said. “The high school was new. It was a well-built building and was quite elaborately equipped for its size and for the size of the program at that particular time.”

Vocational students also left the high school shops and worked in local industries to become directly acquainted with workplace needs. Parkes explained that parents were not always easily convinced of the value of placing their high school sons into these real-world situations.

He recalled that one early vocational program student was placed into a cooperative work experience at the local Darling Valve Foundry. The boy's mother called Parkes to complain that her son had been sent to work “in a dirty hole.” She finally allowed the boy to stay after Parkes convinced her that the foundry experience would benefit her son, who aspired to a career as a patternmaker.

The son continued work at the foundry after graduation and became a successful draftsman. He also continued his education in Parkes' evening classes for adults. His name was Carl Simon. He went on to become the president of Darling Valve, an expert in the atomic energy valve field, and a respected community leader.



“Absolute identity with one's cause is the first and great condition of successful leadership.”

WOODROW WILSON
U.S. PRESIDENT 1913-21

WILLIAM K. YOCUM, INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION PIONEER

In a 1970 interview, Dr. Parkes credited William K. Yocum, a 1916 graduate of the University of Wisconsin and the first director of Williamsport Area School District's vocational education program, with building a foundation for future success.

“Mr. Yocum was a very energetic person and greatly interested in the service to industries. He spent every possible minute he could in the industries working with industrial employers and he was a strong leader; in fact, I attribute most of our ... subsequent success, to his leadership in that he set up the organization system that permitted us to enjoy some measure of independence from the rest of the school district and therefore (we) were able to pursue some of our own objectives.

“There had been some very fine and very strong adult education prior to World War I in the school district, chiefly in the commercial fields ... but we began the adult program – the evening school program, as we know it now – in those early years on a very small basis,” Parkes recalled.

SLOW GROWTH AND POSSIBILITIES

Parkes remembered that approximately 37 high school students enrolled in the vocational program during his first term. He was determined to reach out beyond these traditional students to fill his classrooms. He had a vision in which “working people who are misfits in their present employment, who are underemployed, may come to the school for assistance.”

Returning World War I veterans were among those needing assistance. In 1920-24, a temporary veterans’ training program operated from a rented facility in downtown Williamsport. It offered automotive mechanics, patternmaking, cabinetmaking, electricity, and drafting classes. Over the summer, its instructors would move classes into the high school to have access to better facilities. Eventually, the temporary program closed, but the high school program for veterans continued to grow.

“Well, it was slow growth,” Parkes said in a 1970 interview. “It didn’t look anything like our subsequent vocational adult school. But we began to see the possibilities, partly by our contacts with the industry and our research.”

A significant step in establishing the program’s credibility came in 1926-27, when Parkes, inspired by postgraduate studies at Columbia and Penn State universities, began a foremanship-training program that supported more than 20 local industries. Until then, most contact between the training program and industry had been to place high school students into cooperative education programs, in which they worked part time in industry while completing their high school education.

“Prior to that time, most of our industries, while cooperative, were doing it chiefly as a gesture of goodwill for working boys who couldn’t go to college and had to take vocational courses,” Parkes said. “But, when we started this foremanship-training program, the industries suddenly discovered that here was a service that would earn money for them, and from then on we had no further problems with getting the cooperation of industry. They just loved us.”

Foremanship training and cooperative education programs flourished, despite challenges that ranged

from industry workers who wanted to smoke during training (not permitted in high school classrooms) to high school “co-op” students who wanted to leave industry jobs early each day for football practice and other extracurricular activity. Eventually, the effects of social legislation, child labor laws, and the financial impact of the Great Depression took a toll on these offerings. But challenge led to opportunity under Parkes’ leadership, and a growing campus footprint began to emerge in Williamsport.

“During the time which led up to the Depression, we had a good many layoffs in industry and we would never permit our boys to stay in the plant if there was a serious layoff in the plant, because it took the work away from family men. And so it became necessary then to start more expansive programs for full-time school attendance.”

Expanding the in-school training programs meant expending resources. Even with strong support from the school board and the local business community, funds were in short supply.

At the same time, changes – including the growth in mass production of automobiles – opened new opportunities for workers. Parkes was determined to offer training for automobile mechanics. With no money to build, he converted an old locker room in the southwest corner of the high school building into training space large enough to accommodate one used automobile. One student enrolled in the first session. Then, the school board approved expansion into an unheated space under the football stadium bleachers. Instruction occurred as weather permitted. Finally, a new facility was built in 1931.

“This was perhaps one of the very first auto shop buildings built for this purpose in the state of Pennsylvania, or in the country,” Parkes recalled.

The facility was named “Unit 1” as an expression of the school’s commitment to build an entire campus devoted to vocational training. Parkes, along with A.M. Weaver, school district superintendent, and architect D.H. Schaumburg, visited vocational buildings throughout New York and New Jersey in order to develop plans for expansive new vocational facilities. But, the plans were never accomplished.

DESPERATE MEASURES

“It was the intention of the school board to go on and build unit after unit,” Parkes explained. “However when the Depression hit us, this all went out the window.”

While the school needed a machine shop, local families needed food for their tables. So, Parkes and Ralph Lehman, president of Susquehanna Supply Company, who later became district manager for the first Public Works Administration, launched a plan to build “Unit 2.” They offered a “basket of aid” – literally food in a basket – as payment for volunteers to work on the school’s next construction project.

Parkes recalled hiring an unemployed architect “out of my own pocket” to develop building plans. In dire straits, the school board, already consolidating schools and laying off teachers, funded \$15,000 to build the foundation for “Unit 2” with the support of “basket of aid” workers, who were described by Parkes as “businessmen, salesmen, men who ... didn’t seem to have too much skill but (were) willing to work.”

“It’s hard for us to understand now how desperate things were,” Parkes said in 1970. “But men, working men who had been quite successful family men all their lives, suddenly found themselves to the point where they couldn’t actually feed their children ... people went hungry ... this was a very hopeless, desperate situation. It left a scar on everyone ... that never will be erased.”

Public works funding supported the completion of “Unit 2” and the program’s connection to the local unemployed continued to grow. It was no coincidence that the school, which was adjacent to some of the city’s largest factories, became deeply committed to improving the city’s economic stability.

A 1930 survey of local industries revealed that, while unemployment was high, there was also a shortage of skilled workers in Williamsport. Under Parkes’ leadership, the high school designed a retraining program and worked in cooperation with local agencies to screen, train, and place unemployed workers. The first experimental class in what became known as “The Williamsport Plan” enrolled in 1931.

Parkes said the retraining program was among the first of its kind in the United States. He later worked with

the Department of Public Instruction to encourage the General Assembly’s passage of the retraining act. Nearly all the government’s annual appropriation (\$75,000) went to the Williamsport program – “not because we were selfish,” he explained, “but because we couldn’t get other school districts to get involved.”

Strong local support was also evident. At the same time that school district employees were asked to give back some of their wages to help cover costs, the school board doubled funding for the retraining project three times in three years. Along with increased funding, Parkes noted, came increased success in placing “graduates” in the workplace.

“We got to the point where we could pretty well say that if a man stayed with us and really applied himself, we’d get him a job,” Parkes declared.

“This retraining program was not a hit-or-miss affair,” according to *The Williamsport Schools Through the Years*, published in 1958. “Eight coordinators blue-printed the city’s employment situation and students were trained to fit specific jobs in the community.”

NATIONAL ATTENTION

The Saturday Evening Post was among the leading national media attracted to the story. It declared, “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 the Depression did to Williamsport was about what it did to most similarly placed industrial communities ... but what Williamsport did to the Depression is a story in the best, though of late unofficial, American tradition.”

The article said that local unemployment was “a problem that came to rest” on Parkes’ shoulders and established him as a hero of Williamsport’s “program to match the available jobless with the available job.” *The Post* described Parkes as “a mechanic with a Ph.D., a passion for anonymity, and a mission ... to train youths for jobs and adults for better ones.” *Reader’s Digest* and *Woman’s Day* called him a “mechanic by trade.” *Ladies’ Home Journal* said he was “the dynamic power behind Williamsport’s youth training.”

A 1940 *Woman's Day* article titled "Wanted: A Revolution in Education" spotlighted Parkes' confidence, describing how he went to "the unorthodox length of promising a job to every student who follows his directions – a thing no other vocational school has ever dared to do."

"Graduates of his courses were giving a good account of themselves in every plant in the city," reported *The Saturday Evening Post*. "He had put some 150 supervisors and foremen through courses designed especially for them. His recommendation, in any shop, was as good as a lien on a job."

The success of the retraining program developed to combat the Depression proved crucial to local industry again when the demand for skilled metal trades workers increased in order to meet government defense contracts before and during World War II.

"About 1936 ... we began to see it (World War II) coming," Parkes stated. "Our placements were easier. We could get jobs much easier and we knew the kind of work they were working on, that it had to be preparation for war. Most of our major industries had contracts with the British and French ... they were manufacturing engines, for instance. Avco was making the R680 engine and the British, and earlier the French, were using these engines for training purposes."

War preparation – and the orders sent here by the European countries – helped put Americans back to work after the Great Depression. By 1940, to meet the training needs of local companies like Avco, classes were in session 24 hours a day. More than 5,000 students were enrolled in the high school's training and retraining programs.

"Anything we wanted, we got for war purposes," Parkes said. "We went day and night."

Activities at the school attracted some criticism from local residents who were against the United States entering the war in Europe, Parkes later recalled. But he remained steadfast in his efforts to provide training that would help local businesses secure industry and armed forces contracts.

"We were unobtrusively gearing up for war. It was inevitable," Parkes said.

WHAT WE DO FOR A LIVING IN THE CITY OF WILLIAMSPORT

What We Do for a Living in the City of Williamsport, a study resulting from local job surveys, authored by Parkes was published in 1940. It led to national accolades for the city's effort to combat the Great Depression.

The study compared payroll jobs and educational requirements.

The booklet detailed the "number, percent and educational classification" of 22,070 individuals employed in 415 occupations in Williamsport. It revealed that 41 percent of the city's jobs required some high school or trade training; 28 percent required high school graduation or trade apprenticeship, 4 percent required college graduation. No high school or trade training was needed for 24 percent of the jobs; 3 percent were categorized as miscellaneous.

A forward written by A.M. Weaver, superintendent of Williamsport schools, lauded the study "designed to provide teachers with up-to-date information on jobs in Williamsport." He concluded that, "If these youths are to avoid the frustrations and heartaches of unemployment and poor employment, it is important that their guidance and training fit them for useful employment in jobs which are open to them."

A number of occupations of city workers at that time became mostly obsolete over the next century, including blacksmith, chair caner, ice man, laundress, linotype operator, pattern maker, porter, rubber worker, shoemaker, steam fitter, stenographer, and tanner.

It was during the World War II era of tremendous growth that Williamsport Technical Institute was born in 1941 – taking a homegrown, local education program to a national audience.

“The people of Williamsport had taken very good care of their own youth ... we had set up vocational education for our students, which was second to none anywhere in the commonwealth ... and there was no unemployment among those students,” Parkes said. “Therefore, if we wanted to stay in business, we had to go places where the basic educational program wasn’t of that type.”

An early promotional message for WTI said: “The institute is dedicated to the principle that vocational education should fit itself to the needs of the individual, the community, and the nation.”

The National Youth Administration partnered with the technical institute for training. Parkes recalled that the Civilian Conservation Corps often had 15-20 buses parked in WTI parking lots on Saturdays, when CCC workers came for training. He also remembered large groups of high school students coming from northern New Jersey to Williamsport to receive vocational training that was not available in that state.

WAR TRAINING AND SURPLUS

Among those trained at Williamsport during war years were military construction battalions – carpenters, plumbers, and others – who gained skills in blueprint reading and mathematics. While in training, these individuals helped the school with its own construction projects, Parkes later recalled. The school’s aviation facilities at the local airport also became a site for Air Force mechanics’ training.

In addition to training opportunities, the war provided surplus materials that were put to use in Williamsport. By the 1940s, acquisition of war surplus materials was an important source of instructional materials.

“We developed this to a fine art,” he said. “At one time, we had nine people out on the road scouting military installations for surplus property that might be of interest to us.”



Dr. George H. Parkes

On one occasion, he shared, 16 vanloads of surplus equipment, costing approximately \$10,000, brought an instant payback when faculty discovered enough useable machine tools in the first van to cover the entire cost.

Parkes fondly recalled how faculty “picked over” the surplus for any tools or metal that could be used, and then invited other public entities – such as schools and hospitals – to take what they could use as well. Whatever was left over then was transported to “the dump.”

“This gave us an almost unlimited access to ... improving our equipment. This was usually better than the stuff we had worn out over the years. Every shop, every trade, got into the war program,” he said.



Pennsylvania College of Technology

PENNSTATE



www.pct.edu/centennial

Net proceeds from the sale of *Legacy of Leaders* will become permanently restricted funds that will be invested to create income used for annual scholarship awards from the Penn College Endowed Alumni Scholarship.

© 2012 Pennsylvania College of Technology

Penn College® and *degrees that work*® are registered in U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.