

# Building for the Future

## Mid-State Technical College

1907-2010



By Dave Engel & Holly Knoll

# 'BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE'

MID-STATE TECHNICAL INSTITUTE, WISCONSIN RAPIDS  
IS DEDICATED TO THE FUTURE OF  
MID-STATE VTAE DISTRICT AND ITS CITIZENS

MAY 16, 1976

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"Building for the Future," the theme of Mid-State Technical Institute's (MSTI) dedication ceremony, Sunday, May 16, 1976, heralded the completion of a three-phase building program at the Wisconsin Rapids campus. Summing up a principle that had governed MSTI since its inception, Robert Froehlke, former president of Sentry Insurance, past Secretary of the Army, and president-elect of the Health Insurance Association of America, said, "Mid-State has positioned itself toward future growth."



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1907-2010*





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By Dave Engel & Holly Knoll

**River City Memoirs-MSTC**

*By*

**River City Memoirs**

5597 Third Avenue  
Rudolph WI 54475

*For*

**Mid-State Technical College**

500 32nd Street North  
Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494  
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MSTC

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*The world demands today not simply men and women who can read, write and cipher but men and women who in addition to this, are masters of themselves, who have been so educated that they can do useful things with their hands, who can see things, who have high ideals, who have the manners of the gentleman or the lady...*

H.S. Youker  
Grand Rapids Superintendent of Schools  
1908

*We're sitting here looking at the parking lot at many of our students as they come and go, knowing they have a lot going on in their lives. They have family. They have work responsibility. They have tremendous complexity in their lives, and we better make it worth their time ... Our students represent the reason and purpose for our existence today, as it was in the past and will be for our future.*

John Clark  
MSTC President  
2010



**Foreword****Building for the Future**

A few years ago, several individuals were gathered for an MSTC Foundation event. One of them, Dan Meyer, suggested that college milestones and memories of the “early pioneers” be published in a bound document before it was too late to capture those first-person views. Dan is a wise man.

This book presents the key events in the development of Mid-State Technical College, from its early beginnings as a vocational/training/technical school to its current mission of delivering flexible, innovative, and relevant instruction. MSTC takes seriously its role in central Wisconsin’s economic development as a principal provider of workforce education and training. Today, because of the diligent work done through Wisconsin technical colleges’ early educational pioneers, the state system is recognized as a national leader.

The essence of Wisconsin’s technical colleges is to offer education for all people throughout their lives, regardless of their income or employment. From the very first, we were highly fortunate to have high-minded advocates in our corner, and from all walks of life. Without their passion, drive, and refusal to give up, the visionary leadership of providing the best of occupational education in central Wisconsin might not have come to fruition. Throughout this book, you’ll read the stories, many of them filled with tremendous obstacles and heartache, from several of those visionaries, representing the private, public, legislative, and educational sectors. So many individuals toiled together to make the dream a reality.

The extensive contributions of the founding community leaders, MSTC's early administrators, faculty, and staff cannot possibly be acknowledged with the limited space on these pages. Please know that each of their efforts contributed to the elevation of the college to its present status – and that status, by every measure is one of excellence. I am also deeply grateful to the seemingly infinite volunteers who willingly serve or have served on advisory committees, the MSTC Board of Directors, and the MSTC Foundation. Finally, I must acknowledge the thousands of students and hundreds of employers who, over the years, have invested in the college with the expectation of a great return.

Throughout the 33 years I've lived in Wisconsin Rapids, I've had the opportunity to hear first-hand about the college's success in earning student and employer satisfaction. Mid-State Technical College stands as an outstanding Wisconsin educational institution because of our past and present "pioneers."

I look forward to seeing what the future brings.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Clark". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the printed name.

Dr. John Clark  
President  
Mid-State Technical College (2002-2010)



Foreign students at Vocational School  
(editor photo added)

## **Thinking for the Future**

**B**uilding the Vocational School that became Mid-State Technical College started with big ideas from far away. The notion of improving humanity through education trickled down from New York, Washington D.C., and Chicago, to Madison, Menomonie, and Grand Rapids. From Dewey to Van Hise to McCarthy to our own George P. Hambrecht, H.S. Youker, and Edgar Doudna. The Vocational School and its cohorts were also blessed by well-informed philanthropists from Carnegie to Rockefeller to Stanford to James H. Stout at Menomonie, and our own J.D. Witter, E.P. Arpin, W.D. Connor, and George W. Mead.

Mid-State Technical College also started with big thinkers and big ideas. This time around, improving community was rooted not so much in philosophical ideals but in political reality. Milt Schneider, Marlin Schneider, Dan Meyer, Paul Fleming, Art Hayward, and Fritz Wenzel allied with local business and industry and possessed the fortitude to outlast rivals. Complementing the founders were thoughtful educators with a keen sense of the practical, such as Earl Jaeger and Mel Schneeberg.

## Making It Work

All the big thinking in the world amounts to nothing without application of technical, mechanical, and vocational skills. The school's original name was "Manual" – "involving physical rather than mental exertion." Its etymology derives from, "hands." When they are busy, they become *las manos ocupadas* in Spanish or *dis-trictus manuum* in Latin.

Exemplifying the combination of thought and action are local Vocational leaders such as Director W.A. Sprise – farm boy, bee-keeper *extraordinaire* and parks creator for Wood County. Current (2010) president John Clark is another learned tiller of the soil. Clark began an exemplary Mid-State career as an auto mechanics instructor.

The philosophers will tell you that in the end it's all about the students, who build their own futures by learning drafting, typing, woodworking, cooking, nursing, instrumentation, computer tech, and on and on. Just thinking about a car is not enough. Someone has to build it - now and for the future.



1949  
Auto Mechanics



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## Blaming Witter 40

By Dave Engel

The Vocational School was a Godsend to others; but it killed my career before it got started. Lincoln High School guidance counselor Frances Nairn broke the news: I had missed qualifying for a National Merit Scholarship by one point.

It happened because I was sent for the test to “Witter 40,” a “study hall” on the top floor of the Vocational School attached to the high school. Was it “none of” or “all of the above?” I didn’t know because of a nutty distraction outside, the “coo coo coo” of the fluttering parasites we called pigeons.

Vocational School. I didn’t know in 1962, when I took the test, that it was the product of big thinkers who would have done well on the NMSQT, PSAT, SAT, ACT, LSAT, MCAT, or GRE. Didn’t know it was precursor of an institution whose mission would exceed that of the founders and that half-a-century later I would still frequent the same “River City,” telling my stories.

The Vocational School not only shared the high school but the Normal School to the south, at which I, as a Grove grade-schooler had played a basketball game and attended a Punch and Judy puppet show. Later, my high school locker was in the Vocational addition that connected with the Witter building.

About 1979, after a decade as an English teacher at UW-Stevens Point and a year of novel-writing, I had one of the few job interviews of my life, for GOAL at the Vocational School’s successor and wasn’t offered the job. The result was that, in 1980, I reported to and for the Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* and heard about “Mid-State Technical Institute,” almost every day. A fellow reporter with that beat seemed to be in regular consultation with board president Dan Meyer.

Also in the 1980s, at the 32nd Street North campus, I moderated an ongoing creative writing class that included old neighbors, colleagues, Mid-State administrators, the wife of former director Earl Jaeger (Lorraine) and others who became friends for life. It was during a Mid-State class in 1989 that I received the



phone call that my wife was in labor with my youngest daughter, Angelica. In the 1980s and now, my office as Director of the South Wood County Historical Corp. occupies what was once a bedroom in the home of the namesake Witter family.

When I graduated from Lincoln High School in 1963, Wisconsin Rapids was something special: world headquarters for several notable corporations: Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., Consoweld Corp., Gross Brothers Trucking, Central Wisconsin Transport and Preway Corp. Nearby Port Edwards, often considered the state's richest village, was home to the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. (NEPCO) main offices and founding family.

Consolidated and NEPCO have been sold and the other named enterprises have shut down. But through the gloom, set on an unpromising sand plain, like the city on the figurative hill, is the campus of Mid-State Technical College.

Throughout its early years as a Vocational School and, most dramatically in its metamorphosis to a full-fledged modern technical college in 1973, MSTC has adapted quickly to changing times.

In its Vocational School format it shared three schools: Lincoln High School (now Wisconsin Rapids Junior High); Witter Manual Training School (aka the Vocational School); and Wood County Normal (aka Wood County Teachers College). Programs, teachers, and administrators freely mixed, accounting for the use by the high school of rooms in the Witter building.

To confirm whether my earlier story about avian distraction could possibly be true, I asked former Mid-State faculty member Randolph Facklam if he remembered Witter 40 and whether there might have been loud birds outside the window as I described. "If those pigeons wouldn't have been cooing, I might have got a scholarship," I said.

He laughed as if he had heard it before.

"One time, somebody left the window open at the top of the fire escape and the pigeons came in, and they couldn't find their way out," Facklam said. "Their droppings were all over the floor up there at that time. Yeah, I remember that."





*MSTC*

“Vocational School.” Built in 1907 as the Manual Training School, it was the predecessor of Mid-State Technical College at Wisconsin Rapids.

# **Vocational School**

By Dave Engel

The building that came to be called the Vocational School joined an impressive new campus in a recently-expanded municipality. In 1900, the city of Centralia on the west side of the Wisconsin River and the city of Grand Rapids on the east, merged as Grand Rapids (which, in 1920, changed its name to Wisconsin Rapids). With that “marriage,” the counterproductive rivalry of 60 years could be put to rest.

At the same time, Grand Rapids, a wood products manufacturing center of 3,200, was about to be transformed. The Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. mill was built in 1903. At the same time, citizens and philanthropists sponsored a trio of adjacent school buildings that would bring high-minded pedagogical values to a brick-and-mortar reality.

Traveling south along the Lincoln Street bluff in 1908, the appreciative viewer passed, looking to the left or east, Lincoln High School, only five years old; the brand-new Witter Manual Training building, and the also-new Wood County Normal Teachers College. Behind them was the “fairgrounds;” a race track and public area to be developed as an athletic and recreational park for the High School and the community.

The impressive campus was made possible by enlightened attitudes locally and complementary policies at the state level. As usually defined, the “Wisconsin Idea” expanded “the University” to the boundaries of the state. The resulting policies allowed money and administrative support to flow from the state capital, Madison, to institutions statewide. Through the Progressive Movement, personified by Wisconsin Sen. Robert La Follette, the same big thinkers attempted to reform and energize politics while expanding the Wisconsin Idea to the boundaries of the nation.

## Lincoln

First and northernmost of the three buildings was 1903 “Lincoln.” The up-to-date three-story brick structure replaced nearby Howe as high school and included at times, grades lower than 9<sup>th</sup> and levels beyond high school. It housed the local County Normal Training school for rural one-room school teachers, modeled after a similar system in Wausau.

Upriver 20 miles from Grand Rapids, the Normal that was to become University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point had opened in 1894. It was chosen over Wausau, Marshfield, and Centralia-Grand Rapids, the latter considered too far south in the early going. When the state Board of Regents surprised the “Twin Cities” for a tour of the prospective school site, during a steady rain, they were met by a hastily organized committee with three covered carriages manned by Grand Rapids Mayor T.A. Taylor, ex-Mayor F.J. Wood, Assemblyman J.A. Gaynor, and industrialists Jere D. Witter and L.M. Alexander. When the regents let it be known that \$50,000 would need to be raised in support, Witter offered \$10,000 for starters, though the Rapids bid was not accepted.

Besides “teacher training,” the Lincoln school offered “manual training” classes like those soon to be associated with a separated Vocational School: clay modeling, cardboard work, weaving, basketry, wood work, iron work, and sewing. Lincoln was considered the first state high school to graduate a class that offered manual training or domestic science courses from kindergarten through grade 12.

According to a timetable constructed by T.A. Taylor for the City of Wisconsin Rapids, Lincoln had been nearly completed (at a cost of about \$60,000) when Taylor suggested that Witter outfit the third floor as a domestic science school (for \$10,000). Witter, in the midst of building the big paper mill for his new Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., said he had other ideas he was not ready to explain.

The Grand Rapids *Tribune* visited the manual training department of Lincoln in March 1904 and offered an enthusiastic analysis. “There is no trade and very few professions where a knowledge and love for mechanics does not make a better man

of the possessor, and the manual training department of a school is for the purpose of developing this gift in the boy.”

Two years earlier, in 1902, before the school had been built, the Woman’s Literary and Historical Club invited all the women’s clubs of the city to meet and discuss manual training. About fifty ladies met at the residence of Mrs. E.P. Arpin on a Monday evening to hear Miss Briere opine that, “Thought and feeling put into form and action bring out perfect harmony when these sciences of doing have their proper place in our school curriculum.” Miss McKercher read a paper that concluded, “Many people have a wrong or limited idea of the scope of the work. It does not mean simply the handling of tools, but includes every line of work in which the hand is a factor in obtaining knowledge.”

### Witter’s Will

That plan of J.D. Witter came to light all too soon when, in 1902, the city’s premier benefactor suddenly died. Among the provisions of his will was \$50,000 to the Grand Rapids Board of Education for something new – specifically not the funding of the high school. “Whereas this bequest makes it possible to provide educational advantages for the children of this city which are provided in but few cities in the country,” read a resolution of acceptance, “this cannot fail to lead to a better and more prosperous citizenship.” It was decided that the money, available in three years, would be used for a Manual Training and Domestic Science Building. The planning committee was made up of Isaac P. Witter (J.D.’s son), T.A. Taylor, W.H. Reeves, W.F. Kellogg, and J.W. Natwick. Plans were drawn by Chandler & Park architects of Racine.

Grand Rapids builder and architect A.F. Billmeyer’s bid of \$28,230 was accepted with additional bids requested for plumbing and heating. I.P. Witter, a banker; H.S. Youker, Superintendent of Schools; and J.W. Natwick of the Board of Education, visited Menomonie to learn from the flagship institution of its kind, Stout Manual Training school.

As the J.D. Witter building neared completion, a January 1908 *Wisconsin Valley Leader* said the old fairgrounds upon which it was sited had begun to look like the campus of a col-

lege. "On one side of the new building is the mammoth Lincoln school building and on the other side of it, a few rods away on the same street, is the training school building. All of them are big, handsome brick structures, whose inside furnishings are in keeping with their aristocratic exteriors."

But a letter from Frank Pomainville, Board of Education President, showed that the Witter building encroached on County Training School property and, Pomainville believed, "It was important to place the Witter School Building in such a position as to secure a desirable architectural effect with the Training school and the Lincoln school." So the Board of Education asked the County Board to deed three rods off the north side of the training school land. For the good of the community, county cooperated with city.

Upon completion of the Witter building, classes and equipment were moved from Lincoln. Attending were 100 boys in manual training and 85 girls in domestic science. Besides serving High School pupils at the usual time, the school was open to "day workers" through evening instruction. "Just what will be profitable to do along these various lines is a problem which only experience can determine," said an appreciative journalist. "The future possibilities are great."

The "attic" or fourth floor was used for Glee Club and other music and High School literary societies. Over the years, manual and vocational training took place in all three facilities. When a new boiler was built, it served to heat both the Lincoln and Witter buildings. Both were city schools and run by the city school system.

For the grand opening, the local ladies art club held an art exhibit.

### **Youker**

At the time of building both Lincoln and Witter, H.S. (Henry Sherwood) Youker was Grand Rapids Superintendent of Schools. When he asked the State Superintendent for an outline to plan mechanical courses, he was told the State had none and that Youker's equipment was "more perfect" than that in Madison. Youker and staff were on their own.

According to Youker's 1908 report, enrollment in Wisconsin Rapids schools had grown from 1,000 to 1,400. Where there had been two meagerly-equipped high schools, now there was a fine central school.

A Dodge County native of Canadian parentage and a UW-Madison grad, Youker had come, four years before the report, to Grand Rapids. He believed a "school man" should be involved in the community beyond the school and advocated a broad, liberal program, "which educates the brain in part through the hand by means of manual training and domestic science; an education which widens the interests and sympathies of a child, by giving him music and drawing as part of school work; an education which uses plays, games, gymnasium work, and athletic contests to develop the physical as well as the mental."

In ten years, Rapids schools had introduced kindergarten, music, manual training, physical training, libraries, laboratories, and a commercial department. Said Youker, "The world demands today not simply men and women who can read, write and cipher but men and women who in addition to this, are masters of themselves, who have been so educated that they can do useful things with their hands, who can see things, who have high ideals, who have the manners of the gentleman or the lady..."

Some schools advertised, Youker said, "that they give manual training as a part of their course, when the manual training they give consists simply of a little knife work, paper folding, card board work, done by the regular grade teachers without competent direction and supervision. Other school systems believe that if this work is worth doing, it is worth doing well, and hire a competent person to supervise the work."

After seven years here, Youker became principal of the Oshkosh Normal School and later worked at commercial publishing in Chicago and New York. He died in 1920.

The 1905 census shows Youker as head of a Grand Rapids household that included his wife, Mary, and three teachers: Estella M. Haley (later Farrish), Etta Michaels (assistant principal of the Normal School), Fay MacBeth and Colin Farrish, a lumber scaler.

## Teachers College

**E.P.** Arpin, scion of a prominent Grand Rapids family, was, like Jere D. Witter and his son, Isaac, a supporter of education. In his files is a 1902 letter from the lumber magnate James H. Stout of Menomonie, Wis. whom Arpin described as a liberal-minded benefactor. Stout had started the state's first "County Teachers Training School" and also built a manual training school at his own expense.

Arpin, a lumberman, had met Stout, in 1900, to close the purchase of 47,000 acres of Wisconsin cut over timber lands. In the 1902 letter, Stout suggested Arpin visit him in Menomonie to look over the Manual Training and County Training schools and formulate a plan for something similar in Grand Rapids. Consequently, Arpin, as chairman of the Wood County Board, also became chairman of a committee to study a Teachers Training School for Wood County.

The May 17, 1906, *Wisconsin Valley Leader* reported that Arpin and another lumberman, W.D. Connor of Marshfield, were authorized to accept a 6-8 acre site on the fair grounds of Grand Rapids to be used for a county school building. A deed was received and \$20,000 appropriated to build and equip a training school for teachers. Arpin and Connor would be the building committee and would report to the county board.

In August 1907, the County Normal Training School held classes temporarily in Howe school. In December of the same year, the new building was opened with a speech by Lt. Gov. Connor. The "superintendent" was Prof. M.H. Jackson, who had been at the Lincoln building since 1903, along with Etta Michaels, as the only teachers in the "college."

According to newspaper reports, the new Normal was nicely finished in birch and boasted a large assembly room, library, recitation rooms, offices, rest room, lunch room, laboratory, and gymnasium.

In 1914, the county board organized an Agricultural School to be run in connection with the Normal. A full-time county agricultural agent would be hired, with financial help from the U.S. government. Using the facilities of the Normal and Agricultural



schools, the agent would teach in the day and lecture 150 nights per year. Jackson wrote later of the “splendid work of Mr. [W.A.] Sprise and Mr. [W.W.] Clark of our Agricultural school.” The Normal building was also home to the county Superintendent of Schools and County Nurse. It provided space as needed for the Witter Training School and its later permutations as Vocational School and Technical Institute.

### Hambrecht

“Nothing will ever be attempted if all possible objections must first be overcome.”

The year George Philip Hambrecht made that remark, he was featured in the Madison *Capital Times* (Feb. 12, 1923). By then a former Grand Rapids resident, he owned the “sixth-largest Lincoln library” in the world. Hambrecht, secretary of the State Vocational Board, had written a tract in 1926 about Lincoln that was printed at the Stoughton Vocational School.

An intellectual who believed in manual training, Hambrecht in 1923 wrote, “The Part Time School Movement In Wisconsin.” He liked to quote a Hindu proverb that said we get one quarter of our education from our occupation, one quarter from associates, one quarter from nature and one quarter from books. He supported the decentralized system, which was fortunate because he didn’t drive a car and didn’t often visit the schools.

Born in Milwaukee in 1871 (same year as H.S. Youker), Hambrecht grew up in rural Lake Geneva, where his parents worked for an estate. Wanting to attend UW-Madison, he asked a wealthy neighbor for a loan but was refused. Instead, he put himself through college by selling books, feeding a furnace in a Langdon Street mansion, organizing a cooperative eating group and working as a library assistant.

Leaving UW to teach science and mathematics at Grand Rapids, Hambrecht soon became principal of Howe High School and city Superintendent of Schools, 1898-1902, at which time he left to study law at the University of Chicago. He took extra work in order to pick up a bachelor’s degree in 1903 and a law degree from Yale in 1904.



Hambrecht practiced law in Grand Rapids with H.C. Wipperman until 1907, when he continued on his own. A Republican, he was city attorney in 1908 (the year Witter and Normal schools were built), member of the County Board, 1907-08, and State Assemblyman, 1908-09, and 1915. He was a T.B. Scott Library trustee, 1900-1904.

In 1915, according to a history by W.A. Sprise, State law was amended, allowing the State Vocational Board to hire a State Director. The first was Frank L. Glynn who was replaced by John Callahan, who was elected State Superintendent of Schools in 1921.

In Madison, Hambrecht served on and was chairman of the State Industrial Commission 1915-1921, which led to becoming director of the State Board of Vocational and Adult Education to replace Callahan.

After Hambrecht received an Honorary Doctor of Science in Industrial Arts, in 1931, from Stout Institute, a colleague wrote, "With a clear insight and a spirit of service, George P. Hambrecht has gained national recognition and respect as a pioneer in the establishment and development of educational opportunities for the working boys and girls." Later, the Wisconsin Association for Career & Technical Education would award the George P. Hambrecht Award annually for those with 25 years of service to vocational education.

Hambrecht was still State Director at age 72, when, on Christmas Eve 1943, his house on Gorham Street, Madison, caught fire and he died of a heart attack; the Wisconsin Rapids board sent flowers and a letter of condolence to Hambrecht's daughter.

### **1907 Trade School Law**

A 1907 Wisconsin law required communities over 5,000 to form an Industrial Education Board to levy a property tax to support "schools for the purpose of giving practical instruction in the useful trades to persons having attained the age of sixteen years, as a part of the public school system of such city." It also created the State Board of Industrial Education.

Looking back later from 1938, Hambrecht told the Wisconsin Association for Vocational and Adult Education he learned about the “part-time school” when he met Charles McCarthy of the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Library.

As a former teacher and city school superintendent here, Hambrecht was “naturally interested in educational matters. As I had worked my way through the state University, I was especially interested in working youth and in adult education.”

In 1909, while Hambrecht was a state legislator representing Wood County, librarian McCarthy gathered around him far-seeing manufacturers, labor leaders and legislators of all parties and occupations. Together, they passed a resolution providing for an interim committee to investigate part-time schools for employed youth, evening schools for adults and vocational training for all.

### **1911 Continuation Schools**

As a result of the interim committee’s work, the Wisconsin Legislature in 1911 created the Public Industrial, Commercial, Continuation and Evening Schools and authorized a State Board of Industrial Education to allocate state and federal aid to schools, including that of Grand Rapids, on a matching basis.

Five hours of school per week were guaranteed to, and required of, workers under 16 and to apprentices indentured by the Industrial Commission.

Responsible for educating these compulsory students were local Boards of Industrial Education, such as that of Grand Rapids, with the advice and assistance of the State Board. To his credit, according to Hambrecht, McCarthy “kept enthusiasts from turning the schools into mere trade schools.”

The Vocational or Part-Time School would give the employed child educational contact during the formative and “plastic” years. “These young people, who enter industry at fourteen or shortly thereafter, are the potential driftwood of industry. Without any understanding of social processes or government or even the fundamental tools of civilization, they are the weakest link in our social world.”

Education, Hambrecht said, is the development of the latent talent of each child toward becoming a more intelligent citizen and consumer and a happier and more skillful workman. It would “do for” the working boys and girl what the full-time school system was doing for the more fortunate. Learn-while-you-earn would supplement the three “Rs” with the three “Hs”: head to plan, hand to execute, and heart to guide.

State law provided certain subjects be taught but a wide range of choice was left to individual pupils.

More a concept than a building, Continuation School was located in both Lincoln and Witter, in charge of Witter Principal Hayward and School Supt. Charles W. Schwede. Anyone over fourteen could attend one or more of four departments: industrial, commercial, continuation, and evening all day or part time.

Principal Earl L. Hayward had come from Hancock to found Grand Rapids Business College, after which he taught penmanship and commercial classes for the Rapids schools. Hayward resigned as Vocational School director, in 1919, to be Vocational Advisor for the Federal Board for Vocational Instruction, helping rehabilitate wounded World War I soldiers for employment.

### **1917 Smith-Hughes Act**

Shaped by Wisconsin’s example, the Smith-Hughes National Vocational Education Act of 1917 provided funds for agricultural training and required that each state establish a Board of Vocational Education - replacing the Board of Industrial Education and reporting to the Federal Board. Though it kept the same board of two employers and two employees, the Witter Manual Training school was renamed the Witter Vocational School. Despite state and federal mandates, local governments, such as Grand Rapids, continued to pay the major share of school costs.

### **1919**

The first volume of Vocational School minute books at MSTC is dated “8/22/18 to 6/9/32.” The first entry records a special meeting at the Wood County National Bank, Wisconsin Rapids, of the “Industrial Board,” made up of W.F. Kellogg, President;

Guy Babcock; F.S. Gill; C.A. Hatch; Vocational School head Hayward; and School Superintendent Edgar G. Doudna. The first task was to hire a commercial teacher at \$1,500 per year.

Attached to the minutes is the following un-attributed statement: "Educational problems are becoming more complex and more involved each year. The social unrest, the economic discontent, and the reaction from the idealism of the world war have made life more perplexing and more difficult ... Demands upon the schools have been multiplied and the methods of solution ... have not been able to keep pace with them. The years ahead do not look easy, but with a reasonable degree of forbearance and assistance the schools will respond to the new demands."

A 1953 account also attached to the minute books describes events surrounding the crucial year 1919. It seems that confusion and even conflict existed between: the Director of the Industrial Arts Dept. (of the High School); the Vocational School Director (Hayward); Superintendent of Schools Edward [sic] Doudna; and High School Principal W.A. Boldauf.

To work out a cooperative program, Doudna met with State Director Hambrecht. Their solution was to install a local Director of Vocational Education who would supervise Industrial Arts, Home Economics, and Vocational Education in the school system and act as principal of the Witter Building.

In 1919, in place of Hayward, Wilbert A. Sprise was recommended by N.F. Faulks of the State Vocational Department, by M.H. Jackson, Superintendent of Wood County Normal, and School Superintendent Doudna.

Rural Oconto native and UW-Stout grad, Sprise was a natural. He had devoted summer vacations to carpentry and blacksmithing and to teaching farm mechanics at the Oconto summer Normal, and at Stout Institute, from which he obtained a two-year teacher's certificate for manual training in 1915.

For two years, he taught manual training in Madison public schools, prior to four years at Wood County Normal and Agricultural School, where he taught farm mechanics and supervised work in the rural schools. He was a cabinet maker and amateur artist. Throughout, he kept over 100 hives of bees on the Oconto farm he continued to own.

With the support of Hambrecht, Sprise accepted, on the condition that he would be responsible only to the Superintendent of Public School Industrial Arts and Home Economics.

The mix of responsibilities in Grand Rapids schools was elaborate and conflicting, as shown on August 21, 1919: "The city superintendent will also be director of the Vocational school. Mr. W.A. Sprise will have charge of the Manual Training and Industrial work of all the schools. Mr. W.C. Crossland will handle the related academic work of the vocational school and teach mathematics in the High School. The work in Domestic Science will be similarly correlated. The commercial department of the vocational school will be discontinued."

"Pupils not in high school and properly prepared for commercial work will be enrolled as special students and given instruction with the high school classes. Plans for night school have not yet been formulated."

In past years, the Board of Education had carried the deficit of the Local Board of Industrial Education; but, during 1920 this was repaid and the finances of the two boards separated. Each year, the Vocational School board submitted its own budget and bill to the city.

After 1919, according to histories by Lucille Torresani and Sprise, the Vocational School enrolled more day students under the compulsory law, due to the efforts of Wisconsin Rapids Chief of Police R.S. Payne and his assistant, R.J. Exner, who tracked down truants. Under a "reorganization," students were placed in public school while others were found work and/or enrolled in part-time Vocational classes. "This change in plan is being adopted in several other cities and brings about a closer coordination of the school work for those who have somewhere along the line fallen out of the regular school system."

Members of the Board must have agreed with the statement on page 6 of the minute book.

"There is no question about the value of the school. It is a necessary educational provision for 'it is a salvage proposition which takes the child where, for any reason, the regular school leaves him, and pressing him to its great heart, whispers in his ears words of hope and encouragement.'"

In part by design, most of the Vocational School instructors were not professional teachers, which provided a double-edged sword. Especially in the early years, experience in the field was preferred but a training plan that was developed at Stout was put into place after 1919. Curriculum was worked up for some subjects, such as auto mechanics, bricklaying, pattern making, electricity, printing, and cabinetmaking.

At the county School Superintendent's office in the Lincoln building in 1923, the then-titled Local Board of Industrial Education, made up of Gill, Hatch, Schwenk and Supt. Julius Winden, voted to hire Sprise for another year at \$3,400. The next Board meeting was held in the office of George W. Mead, President of Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., at which Sprise was authorized to employ someone part-time to take care of his records. The relationship with the paper company was continuous as the Vocational school developed papermaking and related classes.

### **1920 Inventory**

A 1920 inventory of Wisconsin's Continuation Schools called Wisconsin Rapids "a railroad center" of 4,493 persons. It counted 2,559 children of school age in six "grade" schools and two high schools. There were four parochial schools.

Power from the Wisconsin River, combined with available soft wood, said the inventory, gave rise to paper and pulp industries, chief among which were Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co., Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., Northern Paper Mills and Ahdawagam Paper Products Co. Other local employers included lumber mills, furniture factories, box factories, wagon works, foundry and machine shops, cement factories, and granite-and-stone manufacturing.

According to the Rapids section of the inventory, the Continuation School started in 1912, following the 1911 law establishing it. "The director then gave his entire time to this school which was held in the Witter building. In 1918, one director was elected (Sprise) to take charge of the shop work of the high school and also the vocational school. This change meant economy and greater teaching force through specialized work than under the first system."

The teaching staff: Sprise, Drawing, Drafting, Cabinet Making; C.K. Crause [sic], Math and Related; David W. Middlecamp, Machine Shop; Oscar E. Miller, Manual Training and Carpentry; Eulalia Breene, Cooking and Sewing.

Former members of the local Board of Industrial Education were: Guy O. Babcock, cashier, Wood Co. National Bank (1912-1919); and W.F. Kellogg, proprietor of Kellogg Lumber Co. (1912-1919). Then-current (1920) members were: F.S. Gill, owner of a paint store; Otto Roenius, owner of a foundry; C.A. Hatch, foreman of Ellis Lumber Co.; J.A. Schwenk, electrician; and E.G. Doudna, Superintendent.

Enrollment in 1914-15 had been 88 day students and 342 evening, by far the highest counted to that point. For 1919-20, there were 70 day students, 187 evening, and two apprentices.

The "Continuation School" used the manual training machine shop, carpenter shop, domestic science rooms, and equipment of the Witter School, "a four-story fire-proof building." Three of the floors were used for industrial work, while the fourth was used as a music room. The director of the Continuation School, said the inventory, was; also in charge of the industrial work of the regular public schools.

Subjects taught for boys were Drawing, Gymnasium, Arithmetic, Business English and Civics. For girls, Cooking, Sewing, House Management, Home Nursing, Arithmetic, Business English, Civics, and Gymnasium.

Evening courses for men and women were Bookkeeping, Shorthand, Typewriting and Cedar Chest Construction. Only men enrolled in Shop Mathematics, Trigonometry, Arithmetic and Spelling, Drafting and Machine Shop and Automobiles, Battery, Tire, and Tractor. Only women enrolled in Sewing and Cooking.

### **1924 Ahdawagam**

The 1924 Lincoln High School yearbook, *Ahdawagam*, contained a photo feature on the Vocational School, opening with the proclamation, "The Part Time School for Workers is the Keystone of the Arch of Democratic Education."

From that *Ahdawagam*:

Board of Vocational Education: President C.A. Normington, Secretary J. Winden (Supt. of Schools), Chas. Hatch, John Schwenk and G.W. Mead. Faculty: W.A. Sprise, Director. Day School faculty: Elizabeth Hatch, Kittie Jensen, Bess Bradford, Herman Cramer, Chas. Zeroth, H.E. Cotton.

Evening School faculty: Herman Cramer, Chas. Zeroth, Von Holliday, Stella Emmons, Mabel Lynn, Helen Johnson, M.E. Neale, Elizabeth Hatch, Mrs. O.J. Leu, Mame Conway, Kittie Jensen. All the women were unmarried but for Mrs. Leu (whose daughter, Zona, married Salvatore Liberace, father of *the* Liberace).

Vocational education enrollment amounted to six women half-time, 35 men and 38 women part-time, one woman full-time, two women "scholarship."

Total day enrollment was 35 men and 47 women.

Evening classes were distributed among 85 men and 298 women to total 383, in Machine Shop, Cabinet Making, Book-keeping, Shorthand, Typewriting, Drafting, English-Arithmetic, Americanization, Dressmaking, Home Art, China Painting, Home Economics, and Auto Mechanics.

"Total number of Adults who have come in contact with Vocational School this year ... 830."

Sprise married Hilda Bergeron of Oconto in 1915. She died in 1922, at Oconto, following the birth of a child at the Oconto Hospital. The Sprises had left Rapids after school closed to spend the summer with their parents.

In 1926, he married Georgia Ross of Nekoosa, who worked at the Consolidated Main Office. They had met when he taught woodworking at the Wood County Normal, which she attended.

## Depression

Through the prosperous 1920s, Witter and Lincoln schools became very crowded, leading to the construction in 1931, through the leadership of J.D. Witter's son-in-law, George W. Mead, president of Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., of a new school replacing the 1903 Lincoln. It was also named Lincoln and still stands as Wisconsin Rapids Junior High School.



As the new school was completed next door, Director Sprise called attention to poor wiring and lights in the Witter building operated by him but owned by a city Board of Education preoccupied with other matters.

Shortly after the new school was built, wider Depression-style political strife came to River City. In 1936, Superintendent of Schools Julius Winden refused to renew contracts of 16 High School teachers. In the view of a report attached to the Vocational Board Minute Book III, Winden had been given “power equal to that of a dictator, the purpose of which was to smash the proposed Teacher Union ... We have lost that which makes for cooperation, replacing it with dictatorial thinking and action.”

Overcrowding was exacerbated by hard times and changes in the dynamics caused by compulsory attendance laws that required full-time attendance in a high school or vocational school until 18 unless employed. Because there weren't jobs waiting anyway and because they could acquire a degree in high school, more young students remained at Lincoln High School rather than attend Vocational School; however, more unemployed adults started attending evening classes to the point where there were more evening than day students.

In 1933, members of the Vocational Board visited the Witter Building to observe crowded conditions. The director reported the number of pupils attending evening school in Wisconsin Rapids exceeded by far that of other similar cities.

Federal programs assisted full-time post-secondary occupational training of the unemployed and some actually found jobs as vocational teachers, including musicians who performed in schools. At the same time, Sprise thought some evening school teachers weren't working as hard as they might and experimented with schemes to stimulate more effort.

Curriculum continued to correspond to changing times. Over state director Hambrecht's objections, others pushed for college transfer classes. In 1934, a program was instituted for instruction in adult education as needed at Consolidated, Ahdawagam, S&S Clothing Company, and Prentiss-Wabers Mfg. Co., all of Wisconsin Rapids.

Records from 1939 show a home-bound program, of which Wisconsin Rapids was considered a pioneer. Home visits were made by a part-time day and evening instructor (and artist), Lydia Lessig. The Kiwanis club, in which Sprise was instrumental, subsidized fuel expenses. About 50 youth and adults in Wood and Portage counties were served.

### **Four Mile Lake**

**I**n 1933, Sprise, then president of the Wood County Conservation League and secretary of the Wood County parks committee, later commission, knowing there are no natural lakes in the Wisconsin Rapids area, worked to help develop a flowage for public recreation. Nepco Lake, south of town on the Four Mile aka Buena Vista creek, had been created the previous decade to secure clear water for the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. but was surrounded mostly by private land.

Sprise and a committee evaluated possible sites for another lake, choosing a site upstream from Nepco on the Four Mile Creek over a possibility on the Ten Mile Creek. The proposed lake would be approximately 3/4 mile long, extending from Highway W to “the Plainfield Road,” later named Highway U. The County Board appropriated \$6,000 for the Four Mile project, to be split with another project in North Wood County that would be sited near Arpin, to complement another developing park at Powers Bluff.

Besides creating the Four Mile lake and associated park, the purpose of the project was pure “Depression” – to provide jobs for the unemployed. Already, among the projects of the federal Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was a labor camp for young men at City Point, west of Wisconsin Rapids. It was more than coincidence that, in 1934, a need for educational work at City Point was brought to the attention of the local Vocational Board.

It wasn’t the CCC but the similarly positioned NYA (National Youth Administration) that made the Four Mile lake project feasible. To implement NYA support, Sprise, in 1935, purchased a panel truck for transporting 10-12 NYA boys to and from work sites. In 1936, all NYA activities in Wisconsin Rapids were trans-

ferred to the Board of Vocational Education and \$5,760 was appropriated by the State Administration to carry on six months of work. Boys would work on the “lake park project” while a sewing project was contemplated for girls.

By 1937, the project was called “Four Mile Lake Park.” A March report showed 31 young men and women employed by the NYA at \$16 per month. Later, 50 youth employed on NYA projects were also required to attend Vocational School one day per week. Work continued through the summer under the foreman-teachers John Schwenk and Mary McGlynn. Among the accomplishments was the Kiwanis Youth Lodge at the east end of the long, winding impoundment.

Recalled W.A. Sprise’s son, Don: “John Schwenk was a machinist in the mill. He had retired. We called him Uncle Jack. How dad got to know him I don’t know, but he used to drive what they called ‘Black Mariah.’ Today we would call it a big panel truck. He used to make the rounds of Rapids. One of the stops was on the corner of 8th and East Grand. The boys would wait there in the morning. He would stop there and pick up the boys and bring them out here.”

Upon completion of the lake itself, the NYA group proceeded to develop rearing ponds for fish at what had become South Wood County Park. The 1939 annual Vocational picnic for students, faculty, and members of the board was held at “Lake Wauzee Cha,” named as a result of a contest and soon to be simplified as “Wazeecha.”

Sprise didn’t have far to go to attend the picnic. He had moved from 8th Street and East Grand Avenue, Wisconsin Rapids, to the Lake area in 1938. For a decade or so, he continued to keep bees until chemical treatments at nearby potato farms killed them off.

## WWII

On Nov. 10, 1941, members of the elite women’s club, Travel Class, joined with the local Elks “and their ladies” to hear George P. Hambrecht, State Director of Adult and Vocational Education, deliver an Armistice day address. Hambrecht, the tribute noted, had formerly been superintendent of Wisconsin Rapids

schools. His topic was, "What Wisconsin Rapids as a Community Can Do for National Defense." Hambrecht had left this area in 1909 to enter the Wisconsin legislature and begin a notable political career in the state capital.

With the onset of World War II in Europe, prior to Pearl Harbor, central Wisconsin employment increased and there were fewer unemployed workers needing to attend Vocational School. Some of those few were half-time "compulsory" students under 18 who hadn't completed high school. Other who were employed but under 18 had to attend Wednesdays. This included not only residents but those here temporarily, such as maids and servants. Youths in NYA projects were allowed to attend the same number of hours as they worked.

With U.S. involvement likely, in 1940 the local Board joined with the State Board in the National Defense Program to train workers for industries, especially those needed for war production. One effect of the Program was that cost of class materials and school utilities would be reimbursed by the federal government. Offered were Machine Operation, Auto Mechanics, Welding, Electricity, Forging, Foundry, Drafting, Sheet Metal, Carpentry, Printing, Bookkeeping, Typewriting, and Accounting.

The local advisory committee included: for management, George W. Mead, president of Consolidated and A.E. Bark, personnel manager of Prentiss Wabers Products Co.; for labor, Edward Gilbertson and John Krohn; for the state employment service, A.H. Ludwig; and, representing the community – Norbert M. Daly (community club), John Dawe Jr. (Rotary), C.A. Normington, employer, C.K. Crouse, employee; and W.A. Sprise, local Vocational Director.

In 1942, after the December 1941 Pearl Harbor attack brought America into the war, the Vocational School rented the adjacent Wood County Normal Agricultural School Shop for defense classes. Local funds paid the \$25 per month rent to the Board of Education. In 1943, the new Plastics Division of Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. asked for war production training for plastics inspectors and instructors. Harvard Clothing wanted courses in "Power Sewing."

Gladys Flanagan was hired as a food specialist to teach food processing and preservation for "Victory Gardens," a popular volunteer program in which residents raised fruits and vegetables primarily for their own use, the purpose being to improve morale at home and to leave more commercially-grown food for the war effort.

The oft-recalled gas rationing proved to be a problem for the Vocational School as pupils found it difficult to get to evening and War Production Training classes. Auto mechanics classes were shut down and defense training stepped up to 24 hours per day with 8 hour shifts. The former Johnson Machine Shop building was rented for the teaching of defense welding though the effort was hampered by a nationwide shortage of welding rods. John Plenke was certified for defense training and taught an additional machine shop class. The 1942 State Advisory Committee requested that classes be organized for women and director Sprise reported that women were already training in all phases of his program. When teacher Frank Govan was drafted in 1943, his wife temporarily took over teaching his classes.

As the war in Europe came to an end and victory in Japan was assured, John Studebaker, U.S. Commissioner of Education, in May 1945 closed all War Production Training programs. The Victory Garden canning program, however, was continued.

### **Post War Boom**

Well before the end of the war, the local Vocational Board was discussing the great numbers of returning veterans that would enroll for occupational training or to finish high school. The community was surveyed to determine training needed for veterans and their prospective employers. In February 1944, 137 discharged men were counted in the area, of which most had their old jobs back and 5 percent were "mentally incapacitated."

The 1944 plan of the State Rehabilitation Department and federal government was to train men and women in their home area and where a Vocational School was maintained. Because "the area" was greater than the county, the problem of accommodating these veterans was multiplied. South Wood County had inducted 1,600 men into the armed forces and had a potential

training group of over 500 without counting adjacent counties.

According to State Superintendent (or Director) Greiber it was the Veterans Bill of Rights after WWII that rescued the Vocational system from the doldrums as a flood of ex-G.I.s enrolled in all kinds of schools because of the financial support they received. Besides attending classes, they also signed up as apprentices and for "On the Farm" programs begun in 1946. Aviation and ground school training was added to the Adult Education Program to assist veterans and civilians in obtaining their pilot's license. With the cooperation of Paper Cities Flying Services, a BT-13 trainer airplane was purchased from the government for \$100. The Navy, however, would not deliver it from Union City, Tenn., so a local vet, Wayne Triggs, flew it up himself. Having served its purpose in training, it was sold to the local airport.

In 1947 came the end of Victory Garden classes due to the canned food on the market and pressure cookers now available.

### **Vocational School of the Air**

A transcript of "The What and Why of Adult Education," Feb. 21, 1949, for the Vocational School of the Air, records "Mrs. Barton" interviewing "Mr. Sprise" and "Mr. Woerdehoff." She asked Sprise if he had been director for a long time.

"The best way to answer that, Mrs. Barton, is to tell you that we directors have a 25 year club. I'm a charter member so you can draw your own conclusions."

Woerdehoff told her, "our philosophy is that education lasts as long as life."

"More things are constantly being discovered, more things are constantly being invented, and it is because there is so much to be learned for anyone who wishes to be at home in the modern world and because so little of it can be counted on to have validity over a long period of time that education can no longer be considered a terminal phase of life."

Sprise said that he was expected to represent the old guard and would show how the philosophy had worked out in practice. Vocational schools, he said, had begun in 1911 as continuation schools with pupils as young as 14. "I know that my own school

was largely a day school for those under 18. But gradually, we came to work mostly with out-of-school adults. As a result, we had to add an evening school to correspond to the only free time busy adults had for schooling.” By the time the name was changed to Vocational and Adult Education School in 1938, “we were already primarily an adult school,” and classes were mostly “cultural.”

Sprise said that, in Wisconsin Rapids, an average city with a population of 13,000, “we manage to touch the lives of one out of four of the city’s residents,” through subjects such as community leadership, journalism, physical education, creative writing, painting, and business law. A weekly forum aroused the interest of 1,000 adults per season.

Sprise said of adult students, “Any further education beyond what they need to earn a living is for pleasure.” There were no “dreaded tests” and the hickory stick “was long ago chopped up for kindling.” Subjects were taught in short units with plenty of films, recordings, maps, pictures, and charts. Teaching methods were informal. “We stress an active type of learning with emphasis on free discussion. Every student is treated as an individual.”

Real achievements, he said, cannot be measured by grades but by personal accomplishments. “If they are learning art metal work, their reward will lie in the beauty of the article.”

Sprise was asked how he could hope to satisfy even a fraction of the interests of adults. He answered that the program depended on part-time teachers, the flexible hours (around the clock during war training programs) of a community center, and “casting our buckets down where we are” through use of community resources, such as high school, church, club, and labor unions.

### **Cooperation and Conflict**

Advocates pushed for a Vocational School to accommodate all levels of shop instruction and home economics – through grade, high and vocational school. Already in 1930, plans had been drawn for the enlargement of the Witter building; but they were dropped in favor of the 1931 High School where space was



allocated for industrial arts and vocational education. After the initial discussions, complained C.K. Crouse of the Vocational Board, “we were entirely forgotten.” Lack of classrooms at Witter continued to be a problem and some courses were eliminated.

A 1940 survey showed four buildings used by the Vocational School: Lincoln, including the field house and classrooms; Witter, which was also used by the Board of Education for High School classes; Lowell Elementary School gym and Emerson Elementary school, both on the West Side.

In 1941, when a metal Quonset hut was purchased to be erected to the rear of the Vocational School, the Board of Education agreed to pay for the building, provided the Vocational Board bought the needed equipment.

By 1944, High School classes were using “the shop” five of what the Vocational School considered “our” six periods each week. The problem was temporarily relieved by the Vocational School renting the adjacent Agricultural School and a welding shop on the west side of the river. As World War II continued, some instructional areas operated 24 hours per day.

In 1947, the “Vocational Room” in Wood County Normal was used five days and two evenings per week. Board minutes show that, in 1949, Normal principal A.W. Zellmer and Vocational director Sprise agreed that new lights in the Normal building paid for by the Vocational School would be property of the Board of Vocational and Adult Education. In 1951, the Vocational Board was to be charged for rooms in the building and one additional room in the basement that would be made available to the Vocational School for the next year.

In the 1950s, the veterans on-the-farm program was dropped for lack of veterans. No federal funds were appropriated for defense education during the Korean conflict, 1950-53. However, returning soldiers again provided significant pupil populations.

Consistent with the prosperous Fifties were the interactions of the Vocational School and local industries. As the decade began, Prentiss Wabers Products Co., which had converted back from weapons to stoves, commented “very favorably” on a course given to their foremen entitled “Human Relations.” There was also



a class in “Time & Motion Study,” taught by Bert Gottlieb of the University Extension. In June 1951, Harvard Clothing’s request for a Power Sewing Machine Training Program for 35-50 employees was found “not acceptable” to State Director Greiber who considered it a “vestibule” class (purely for operator training). About the same time, Wisconsin Rapids Police Chief, R.J. Exner expressed appreciation for a recent institute for Law Enforcement Officers of Central Wisconsin in Lie Detection. In 1953, Foremanship Training was conducted for Prentiss Wabers and Sales Promotional Work for Frank Garber Co. Four new courses were offered to the general public, three of which were conducted by University Extension Professors. Nursing curriculum continued to grow along with technical programs that were often more academically demanding than traditional vocation programs.

### Arts & Crafts

According to Kathleen A. Paris’s *A Political History of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education In Wisconsin*, the 1950s were problematic for vocational schools, forced by lack of students to turn to arts-and-crafts classes held mainly at night. Offering few true vocational courses beyond typing and machine shop, public support at high levels of leadership diminished. Vocational schools were viewed as “dumping grounds” for kids who couldn’t make it in high school; administrators were low-tax low-spenders; too much emphasis was placed on hobbies and recreation; there was backlash from years of poor public relations with surrounding communities and public schools; some Vocational schools had a mediocre teaching staff; facilities were archaic.

Yet, small schools such as Wood County’s insisted crafts and general education were as important as occupational programs which they had limited ability to provide. Sprise led directors from Antigo, Cudahy, Menasha, Rhinelander, Stevens Point, and Watertown, who felt they had little to gain from proposals then current. Sprise’s former colleague and school ag teacher, William W. Clark, chair of the Senate Committee on Education and Public Welfare, supported the small schools and a compromise was reached; but the Vocational budget of 1955 was defeated.

Another black eye, or so it seemed, came from above. Stout Institute had represented a model for vocational schools state-wide. In 1955, the Coordinating Committee for Higher Education placed Stout under the State College Board of Regents, along with former teachers colleges such as Stevens Point and Eau Claire. All was not lost and Stout, even as a university, continued to specialize in vocational-style education.

### **“New Addition”**

Meanwhile, Lincoln High School was running out of space, said Principal Aaron A. Ritchay, who pointed that enrollment would reach 1,160 in 1960, 1,350 in 1961 and on up. Without additional classrooms, half-day school would be necessary by 1961, he claimed.

The Vocational School was just as crowded, said Director Sprise. At a joint meeting with the Board of Education, a tentative blueprint for an addition, connecting the two schools, was submitted and rejected as too elaborate. A new plan reduced the size of rooms and it was expected at least one unit of a new school could be built in 1955 or 1956 dependent upon the progress of the West Side school (Mead Elementary) and Howe expansion projects.

Approved by both City and Vocational Boards of Education at a joint meeting was “unit one” at 42,680 square feet, reduced from the 112,000 proposed in 1952 by Childs & Smith, Chicago, architects of the 1931 Lincoln building. Cost went down even more drastically from \$1.3 million to a half million.

Arrangements with Childs & Smith were canceled. Invited to submit plans were three local firms: Billmeyer & Son, Rowland Associates and Donn Hougen, who had provided drawings as early as 1935 for expansion of the Witter Building.

The Hougen plans were presented by associates Donald Schraufnagel and William Funk to a Board of Education made up of John Crook, Nancy Gilbert, Leslie Hill, Ward Johnson, David Markworth, Ruth Sampson and Donald Farrish and a Vocational Board of Clarence Showers, Harold Akey, Victor Young, L.W. Murtfeldt, R.E. Clausen and W.A. Sprise.

Preliminary drawings were accepted July 16, 1956.

Mayor Nels Justeson and the city council appropriated \$450,000 for what was termed the Vocational School addition and music department building. The “new addition,” opened June 1958 and equipment was quickly moved from the Witter Vocational School. For the open house and exhibits, delegations attended from Madison, Janesville, Tomahawk, and Marshfield.

Preway, Inc., the former Prentiss Wabers, donated complete built-in electrical units for the Homemaking Dept. Also contributed, from Helen Benson of Harbor, Ore., were 12 paintings by John Warren of Madison, “part of a collection my late husband Robert Benson and I enjoyed over the years.” Mrs. Benson said she was gratified that her paintings had “found a happy home in your handsome new Addition as well as in the Witter Vocational School, now being remodeled.”

### **Cooperation**

**S**pride had long urged a return to an original cooperative plan between the Vocational and High School that he said had been abandoned in 1936. Attached to Minute Book No. III, beginning July 15, 1953, is a report calling for a reexamination of policies and agreements between the Board of Education and Board of Vocational Education back in the critical year of 1919, when the “cooperative” system was set up.

The Vocational Board noted that, in the minutes of the Board of Education, the architect called the new structure an addition to the High School rather than to the Vocational School, raising further issues.

Who would supervise the new building and under whose jurisdiction would it fall? Would any of the rooms intended for vocational and industrial arts be used for High School academic classes or offices? Who would provide a janitor? What if High School students monopolized all the shop periods?

“At present the entire equipment for Auto Mechanics, Drafting, Printing, Sheet Metal and Welding has been purchased by the Board of Vocational Education,” said the report, “including 50% of the Machine Shop and Clothing Depts. The Board of Ed-

ucation owns the entire Woodworking equipment, all of the Food Dept. except loans of stoves by local merchants.”

Looking to the growth of the city and greater demands on the vocational school system, the Director wondered if it was time the Board of Vocational and Adult Education establish a policy of independence, clarifying his critique: “The analysis and suggestions are my own and have been placed in writing so there can be no question as to the problems as I see it,” and that it “No way reflects on the present administration of the high school nor is it to infer that there is unfriendly relationship at the present time.”

Sprise’s points were taken up—to the satisfaction of all. For example, in January 1959, rent of \$2,500 paid regularly to the Board of Education was eliminated; in return, the Board of Vocational and Adult Education agreed to pay one janitor’s salary.

### **The Old Building**

**A**t the end of the decade, the campus included a 1931 High School attached to a 1958 addition that connected to a 1907 Vocational School. The latter was clearly the weak link. Sprise said summer temperatures rose as high as 92 degrees with no control except through the opening of windows and doors.

In September 1959, the author of this history started his freshman year at LHS and was assigned a locker near the band room in the Vocational addition. The same year, a survey suggested renovation of the fourth floor of the Witter Building and reviewed recent changes in the all-purpose room and the old office. A new curtain had been hung for the stage; a used piano and the old motion picture screen were brought from the field house.

### **Rosandick**

**I**n 1957, Sprise invited Elizabeth (Libby) Rosandick to teach beginning sewing in night school. She came with a degree in Home Economics and Education. “At that time, night school classes were the big part of the Vocational School. The daytime, full-time programs were just getting started. We had the Continuation program for students that legally had to be in school until age 18. These were kids that had been kicked out, dropped out or couldn’t make it in high school.

“After I taught in night school for a year or two, I started teaching the Continuation students part-time in the day: home ec, foods course and clothing course. We had 10-12 girls.

“The second year, they gave me the boys in a foods class. That was a challenge; but I made sure I befriended the largest boy. They’d do cute stuff like putting the jackets in the dishwashers. With the boys, as long as you kept them eating they were happy.

“I think I had them for two years and then the High School started the CORE program, really the first special ed class. At that time, 1959 or ’60, the Continuation students went to the High School. I think that’s when our daytime programs started.

“And then it was post-high, when we started the full-time programs in some of the business and trade and industry programs. Welding and auto mechanics were probably two of the earliest. Probably mechanical design.

“The philosophy of the system was changing from night school and Continuation to job training, occupational training, and that’s really what the full-time programs were in the daytime. They were training for jobs. They were no longer secondary education. That was post-secondary. Post high school.

“It started very small. There were several business programs. Accounting was probably one of the early ones. Secretarial Science was another one.

“We were still in the Witter Building. Then we expanded and then the Normal school went out of business when they consolidated the schools and closed all the one room country schools. I think that was ’65.

“We had graduation in the Normal School gym and if you remember it was a little cracker box gym. We had a small stage, and I know the speaker pushed his chair back and the chair fell off the back of the stage. Fortunately the speaker didn’t.”

“That Witter Building was so old and so creaky. We had a foods lab upstairs that, if you would come in at night and you turned on the light, the cockroaches would scurry for the edges. Our clothing classes at the end of the year would always have style shows up on the fourth floor.

“Bill Goetz probably told you about the auditorium on the

fourth floor. He showed a movie of driving down Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago. One night, when he was showing the movie, there were these birds flying and he said hmmm, now these birds were never there before. He turned on the light and it was bats coming down off of the belfry. All these ladies in driver's ed were covering their heads.

"But quite often I would go into the Witter Building on weekends to catch up on something or do something and *creak, creak*, you know. Usually when the kids got a little older I'd take one with me just for moral support. They'd go into the student lounge and look for money under the vending machines."

### Goetz

Bill Goetz, a Conservation Education major at the Stevens Point college, had tried high school teaching at Elroy and Merrill before Bill Sprise got him into the old Vocational school, in 1955, teaching driver education. "I taught high school kids, Assumption, Lincoln, adults way more than I could handle well; then eventually the High Schools put the program in.

"I had an office, would you believe, on the third floor. It was a closet and in the back of it was storeroom and coffee pot and the teachers were going through there. Pretty fundamental, pretty brutal; and then when they built the new 1957 place, I had my own office and I paneled it with knotty cedar, and I put up pictures. I had a fish hanging on the wall. I had a leather couch. People thought I was the Superintendent.

"We taught my night school class in four or five different places; but up on the fourth floor, they had a little stage up in front; and on both sides they had a store room. Libby and I went through there one time and we found a bunch of stuff. In fact, we found some plates that had the name Witter on them. They had a couple classrooms up on the fourth floor and of course some of the High School people had classes to begin with in the old Witter building.

"There was room for one car in the auto mechanic shop. It was primitive. In Point, they were in the basement of the old High School and in Merrill, they were in an abandoned garage.

Another place was in an abandoned armory. Up in Ashland they were in the old post office building. Anything was good enough for vocational schools.”

### **Forums**

**W.A.** Sprise dates the free public forums to 1940, counting 600-2,000 in attendance per meeting. “I also had MC’d and set up the travel and adventure programs in the field house,” said Goetz. “People would jam the place. You’d sit there like this and then it’d get so hot; you’d turn on the fans it got so noisy you couldn’t hear.

“Then you had to get kids to take down the chairs and put them back up and all that sort of stuff. And of course out here we had the auditorium. I don’t know what’s happened to the program. It’s just kind of died out. People got too many other thing to do I guess.

“This was before much TV or much anything else. We’d have five of those programs a year. From Germany and Hawaii and all over the place and the old people loved it. Had them over at West Junior High and then here [MSTC] in our auditorium for a while. In fact, Craig Timm, when he was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade over at the former West Junior High, he was my helper, and then he worked out here at Mid-State.

“Attendance dwindled, as you had TV and opportunities to travel more and see things. The prices got higher for the forums. Where we used to do maybe four or five, we got down to three.”

### **Facklam**

**R**andolph Facklam had been a principal at Biron school, just Rupriver from Wisconsin Rapids, then taught at Lincoln High School for two years and that’s where Sprise asked him to come to the Vocational School. Facklam took a look at the setup at noon and went home and told his wife he had never been so bewildered.

“The school had to cooperate with the High School. Now this was a vocational school and High School students went to vocational schools too, woodworking shops and so forth, and their schedule had to be worked out with the Vocational. Then we’d

take those who were not going to high school.

“Did they need Spelling? Did they need Arithmetic? Did they need Shop work? It took me about a year before I began to understand it, the system.

“There were so many kids in town that didn’t want to go to high school or wouldn’t work in high school or failed in high school and the law said they had to go to school because they were 16, so they had to go somewhere and that’s what happened there. We had 30-40 at a time. We called them, “vo-kids.” At the same time, they would offer training to adults. A lot of that was night school classes.

“We had to change gradually and finally turned these ‘kids,’ we’ll call them, back into the high school and everything became a vocational adult school. We began to work with the mills, for example. It was quite a while before we got full programs. Finally, the first program that was established with state acceptance was secretarial science. Marketing was an early one and then we kept adding and adding.

### **New Addition**

“It made a change when they built that. The machine shop moved into the new building. Auto Mechanics moved into the new building and released space here to be used by, we’ll call it the Vocational School.

“Auto Mechanics was taught by the High School. If there was a free period and we could use it, we did. We taught welding in another building, which is back of the County Normal. It was called the “welding shop.” Later on we took over the County Normal building.

“Before that, High School kids would have to run through the cold over to the classes back and forth. Their orchestra was on the top floor of this building so the poor tuba player would have to carry that big tuba up and down the stairs.”

### **Teaching**

“We’d get the kids in there and I’d teach them to write something. I used simple sentences and we worked that out. We tried all sorts of things. I even tried to teach them bookkeeping. The



problem was, most of these kids would not work at home. So if I gave them an assignment, forget it. The next day I would start from ground zero.

“To give you an idea of the caliber of kids we had: On Halloween, someone came up the fire escape and soaped the window and it had all kinds of undesirable words on it. I was doing something when I heard a noise. One of my students had gone outside with a pail of warm water and soap and was washing the window. They were that type of kids. I liked them very much.

“Then I taught woodworking because I had a background in ‘manual.’ I was born and raised in a shop so I could weld and you understand, we’d look and, oh, got a free period here. Well, Randy, can you teach some welding? Okay. They had a certification at the state which was kind of funny. I didn’t know anything about it and it caused me a lot of trouble.

“The pay was equal to the public system. What the High School had, we had. There was no difference in pay. About the time I came into the system, married men got, seems to me \$400 more because they were the head of the family. The argument came, equal pay for equal work and there were some bitter words spoken in those committees at that time.”

### **Night School**

“**S**pride was a great person for night school. Anything the public would enjoy and enrich themselves. He had classes all over. For example, one time, I taught four nights a week and two classes on some nights. He was great for handicraft and sewing. He would have lecturers come in, similar to the way Bill Goetz, for a while, was running it. I would say there wasn’t a night, maybe except Fridays, that there weren’t four or five six classes running in the night school program.”

### **Retrospective**

**I**n 1961, as the author of this book entered his junior year at LHS, director Spride retired after 42 years with the Vocational School. The *Daily Tribune* praised his efforts and said when Spride had begun, in 1919, manual arts were limited to drafting

and woodworking. Through the years, “manual” arts was changed to “industrial” arts and the program expanded to include welding, machine shop, and metal working.

“About 70 percent of the youth go into industry rather than on to college,” Sprise said, “and we can be of tremendous help in guiding this 70 percent into fields of their best aptitude.” He said the High School and Vocational School had formed the first cooperative industrial arts school in Wisconsin when they pooled instructors and equipment in 1919, the year Sprise was named vocational head.

The *Daily Tribune* noted that an experimental program in 1960 was being developed into a technical business course that would grant an associate degree.

### Everetts

Applicants for the Director position were interviewed by a board that consisted of C.M. Showers, president; L.W. Murtfeldt, vice president; Harold Akey, secretary; Victor Young, member; and R. E. Clausen, Superintendent of Schools. A contract was offered to Eldon Everetts, director at Stoughton for four years. The Minnesota native had bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Stout State College and had taught industrial arts at Morton and Willmar, Minn., for 15 years. He also had experience as a machinist, draftsman, and carpenter.

Soon the board was cooperating with Everetts’ requests for: a new telephone system; insurance; moving the drinking fountain; procuring an automatic transmission car; and permanent record keeping.

Everetts launched a publicity campaign, distributing school materials to the general public, school bulletins to former students and a copy of the Business Administration brochure to all 1961 high school graduates in the area. He reported a “fruitful” campaign but admitted that a letter sent to every high school graduate in the area offering a part-time graphic arts program had not brought forth a single enrollment.

A proclamation from Mayor Justeson in December 1961 proclaimed Vocational-Technical and Adult Education week in

Wisconsin Rapids to honor the Golden Anniversary of Vocational-Technical and Adult Education in Wisconsin. It had been 50 years since the Continuation School act of 1911.

### **Alternative School**

One of the Lincoln High School students of the class of 1946 was Don Sprise, son of W.A. Sprise. "Many of the classes that I took were over at the vocational school. I don't know whether it was at night school or what. All the manual training classes. Woodworking and drafting. I did a lot of shop work. Von Holliday was the teacher of auto mechanics over there. And then the old band room was up there on the top floor. We had all of our practice up there during orchestra.

"Somebody wrote a letter to the Tribune about the pigeons. They were always on the south side of the building where the sun was shining on the windows. Pigeons never bothered us. I don't know if we were used to them or not or we just made so much noise out there that they didn't bother us.

"One of the things that Dad and Aaron Ritchay were instrumental in was working together. They had the equipment over there at the Vocational School and they had the teachers. So a lot of us went over there for manual training classes.

"Aaron and my dad hunted and fished together. Those two could tell more stories on one another than you could possibly imagine.

"Aaron Ritchay and Floyd Smith, the Superintendent, and Rudy Exner, chief of police, and that's when the three of them worked out this concept I'm going to call the alternative school. A lot of the kids didn't like the classroom setting and would get in trouble.

"Aaron and dad and Rudy Exner worked out a program. The kids would go in the Vocational School and take vocational training rather than the classroom setting. It seemed to work, whether through threat, intimidation or bribery I don't know. But at that time and when I was in high school, I remember kids getting in trouble in the hall. Aaron would grab them and push them up against the locker. "You won't do that again will you. No sir."

## **Beginning of the Second Beginning**

**I**n the years after World War II, new courses in the modern vein proliferated: Civil Air Regulations, Meteorology, Navigation, Mathematics for Millwrights, and Planning Your Estate. Graphic Arts for Paper Technicians at Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. and Nekoosa Edwards Paper Co.

Other vocational schools had begun to offer two-year programs beyond high school when Sprise wrote to the State Board of Vocational and Adult Education to discuss a one or two-year Post High School Business and Clerical course for Wisconsin Rapids and surrounding area. A survey conducted by the Stevens Point Vocational School in that city's three high schools had indicated a need for a Post High School Commercial course. Of 310 replies, 197 desired Vocational training and 102, college. A similar survey was planned for Wisconsin Rapids.

Not only was the idea of post-secondary education expanding, so were boundaries. Already in 1947, Sprise said the vocational school served, not the city itself, but the "Wisconsin Rapids area" of south Wood County, all Adams County and parts of Monroe, Juneau and Jackson counties. Consequently, who should pay?

At the first meeting of the Wisconsin River Valley Boards of Vocational and Adult Education in Stevens Point on Jan. 16, 1962, the issue was pursued.

During the 1950s, local districts had continued to assume a greater proportion of costs of operation, compared to state and federal aid. By 1956-57, 87 percent were paid by local taxes. With ever greater services and needs, it made sense to move toward larger districts with larger tax bases. Consequent legislation in 1951 allowed city vocational districts to expand to the boundaries of public school districts. The 1957 Area Development Act permitted formation of vocational districts such as those already operating: Green Bay, Wausau, Eau Claire, and La Crosse.

Perfectly aligned with this trend and following enabling State legislation, on Dec. 11, 1962, the Wisconsin Rapids Board of Vocational-Technical and Adult Education voted to expand the Wisconsin Rapids Vocational School district to match the high school districts of Wisconsin Rapids, Port Edwards and Nekoosa,

long known as the “Tri-Cities.” In 1964, the Board considered expanding to the boundaries of Wood County, following the Director’s report on criteria for a degree-granting technical institute and on State procedures for developing an area school system.

Ever expanding its vision, the Board recommended to the State in 1965 that the Wisconsin Rapids district be composed of Wood, Adams, Portage, Juneau, and Marquette counties and the school districts of Plainfield, Wautoma, and Wild Rose.

Because of the call for Instrument Technicians in the Wisconsin River Valley and Fox River Valley paper mills, training was to begin in 1965-66, provided the Wood County (Teachers) College was made available. The building wasn’t needed for its original purpose because country schools and districts had been merged into central districts, including Wisconsin Rapids. Teachers needed four-year degrees from schools such as Wisconsin State University at Stevens Point rather than the two-year version offered by Wood County (Normal) Teachers College.

The local need for space also led to the use of a city garage at 3331 10<sup>th</sup> St. S. to inaugurate the Auto Body Mechanics curriculum in the fall of 1967.

Sprise said, “At the end, when the normal school program went out we took it over, the building. It was our business department. We had one room for a library. That’s where we had our faculty meetings and everybody could fit in one room. Now we needed an auditorium.”

But bigger ideas were in the wind. The vocational addition was less than ten years old when a new facility in a brave new world was planned: the Wisconsin Rapids district school of Vocational Technical and Adult Education. On June 13, 1967, Vocational Board president Clarence Showers read a letter from State Director C.L. Greiber, notifying the local entity that they would cease to exist on July 1, 1967.

To respond to the directive, a meeting was held on June 19, 1967, “at the school.”

A Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* story of June 19, 1967, said that “the Wisconsin Rapids Vocational, Technical and Adult Education School will be no more after the end of June.

“That doesn’t mean there won’t be any classes this summer or fall in the Witter Building or former Wood County Teachers College Building. But it will be, for the Wood County VTA [or VTAE] School, the first step toward a technical institute to serve six Central Wisconsin counties organized into District 14.

“The board which has operated the Wisconsin Rapids school for 53 years will go out of existence at the end of the month.”

A District 14 board would be appointed by Wood County Board Chairman Arthur P. Hayward, after conferring with state VTA officials, to take office July 1.

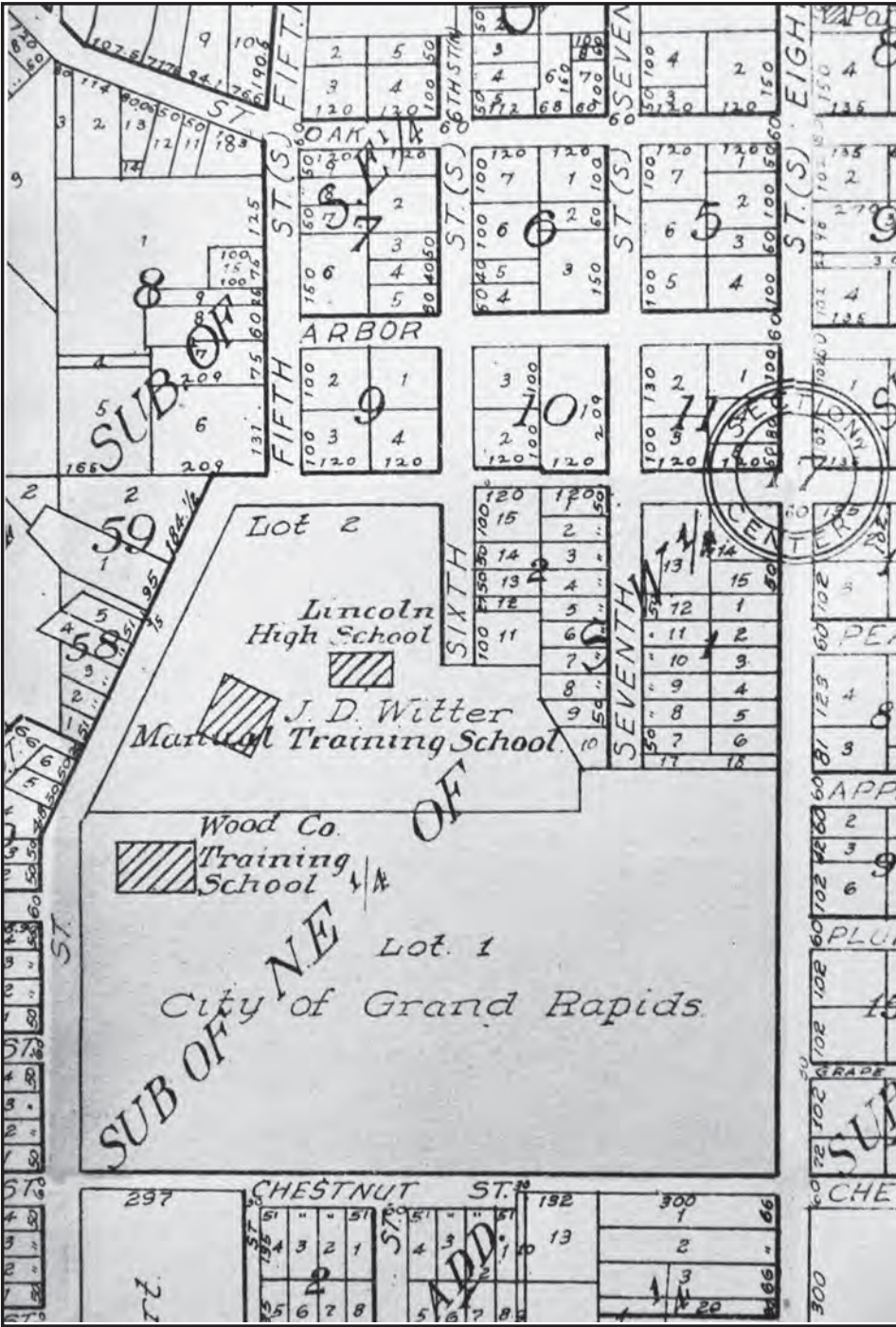
Eldon C. Everetts, director of the school since 1961, reviewed some of the accomplishments that had taken place since Clarence Showers, president since 1956, had come on the board in 1948.

There were three full-time teachers and a director in 1948; 20 teachers and seven full time or part time administrators in 1967. There were 66 students in continuation education for high school age students and about 1,400 part time in 1948; 182 post-high school students and 2,400 part time in 1967. The operating budget had increased from \$48,798 to \$400,667. Taxes on city property owners had increased from \$32,841 to \$159,974. State and federal aids rose from \$12,754 to \$113,380.

The school no longer conducted daytime classes for high school age students who were instead accommodated by the “core” program at Lincoln High School. Post high school education had begun in 1961, when Everetts came from Stoughton to be director. There were then 20 students in two courses. In 1968, there would be courses in 13 fields and for the first time, an associate of arts degree.

With the new district, the efforts of the Vocational Board were no longer needed. The rest of the minute book is blank and the story of the transformation would be written elsewhere.







Occupying a central location in Grand Rapids/Wisconsin Rapids, the J.D. Witter Manual Training/Vocational School cooperated with Lincoln High School, to the north, and the Wood County Training School/Normal/Teachers College, to the south. Most of "Lot 1" shown became Witter Field, home to festivals, high school athletics and professional baseball teams.

The Lincoln High School shown was replaced by a second Lincoln in 1931, later serving as East Junior High and now Wisconsin Rapids Junior High School.

Note that Oak Street was the thoroughfare in 1909, prior to the extension of East Grand Avenue.

# 1909 Atlas of Wood County

*Courtesy of  
South Wood County Historical Corp.*



*SWCHC*

## **Vocational School**

The Witter Manual Training building, right, was connected to the “old” 1903 Lincoln High School, left, by the elevated walkway shown. With the construction of a new high school in 1931, the old school and walkway were removed. In 1957, an addition connected the “new” Lincoln High School with Witter, then referred to as the Vocational School. The High School and Vocational School shared the “vocational” or “band room” addition and the high school used space in the Witter building, e.g. “Witter 40” in the “attic.” The Witter building was razed in 1979.



MSTC

### **Teachers College**

The “Technical Annex,” according to the sign above the door above, Wood County Teachers College/Wood County Normal was also used by the Vocational School, especially after the Teachers College closed in 1965, and the property was sold to the city of Wisconsin Rapids. The college offered a Model school similar to other elementary schools at which prospective teachers “practice taught.” The structure was razed in 1978, three years after Mid-State moved to its 32<sup>nd</sup> Street campus. The window over the front door eventually was incorporated into the Mid-State Poetry Towers (MSPT) tower by *Building for the Future* co-author Dave Engel.



W.A. Sprise, center, Earl Sherman to his left, with apprentices.  
Sign: "Lubrication"





Above: Identified on reverse by W.A. Sprise: "Study of Battery & Generator Work Part Time Boys Wisconsin Rapids."

*Photos from MSTC*

Facing, left: 1923 Wisconsin Vocational School Directors Conference, Madison. Front: Mr. Comstock, Stoughton; Mr. Graham, state supervisor of trade and industrial education; Mr. Cooley, Milwaukee; Mr. Hambrecht, state director; Charles E. Whalen, guest speaker, Madison; Mr. Gunn, state supervisor of trade and industrial education; Mr. Mitchell, Beaver Dam; Mr. Sprise, Wisconsin Rapids; Mr. Christensen, Neenah.

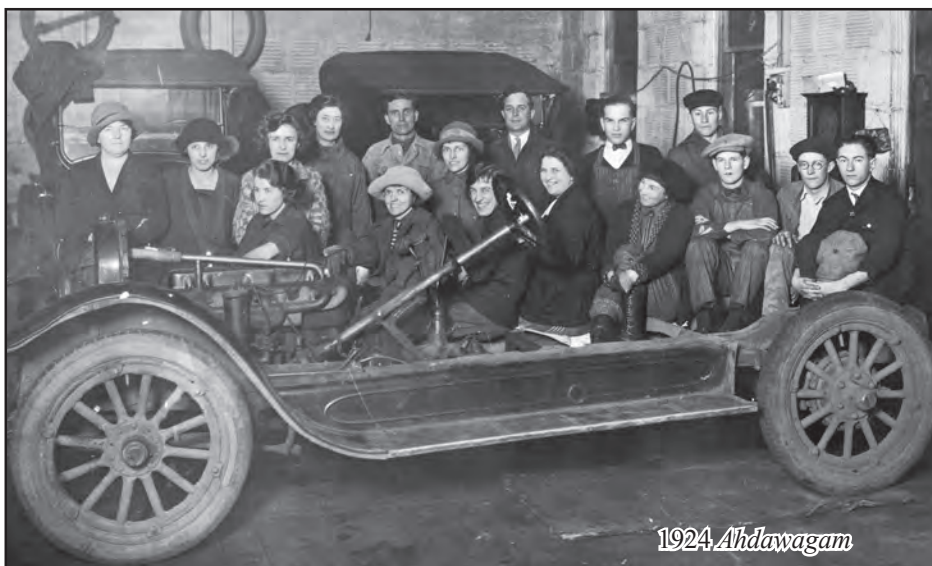




*Photos from MSTC*



“Part time girls working under two instructors.” Wisconsin Rapids



“Auto Mechanics. Nothing too complicated for these women.”



“Section of Cabinet Making Class” in “Adult Education”



Women and men participated equally but separately in activities such as cooking, above, or China painting, right. The “girls” above appear to be younger than those at right, though both groups are probably adult “night school.” (Co-author likeness added later)

*Photos from MSTC*

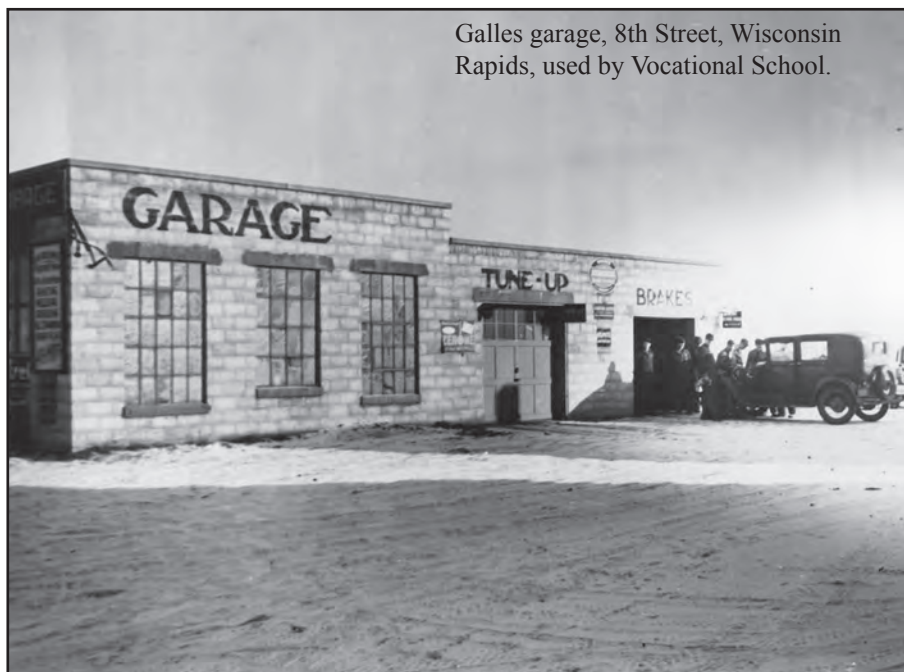


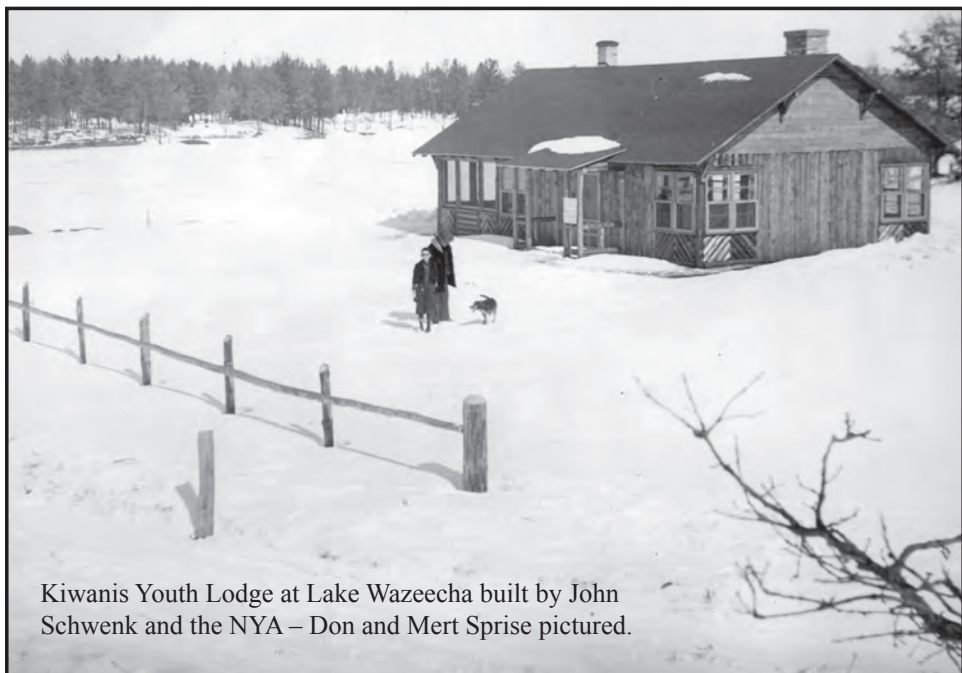






*Photos from MSTC*





Kiwanis Youth Lodge at Lake Wazeecha built by John Schwenk and the NYA – Don and Mert Sprise pictured.

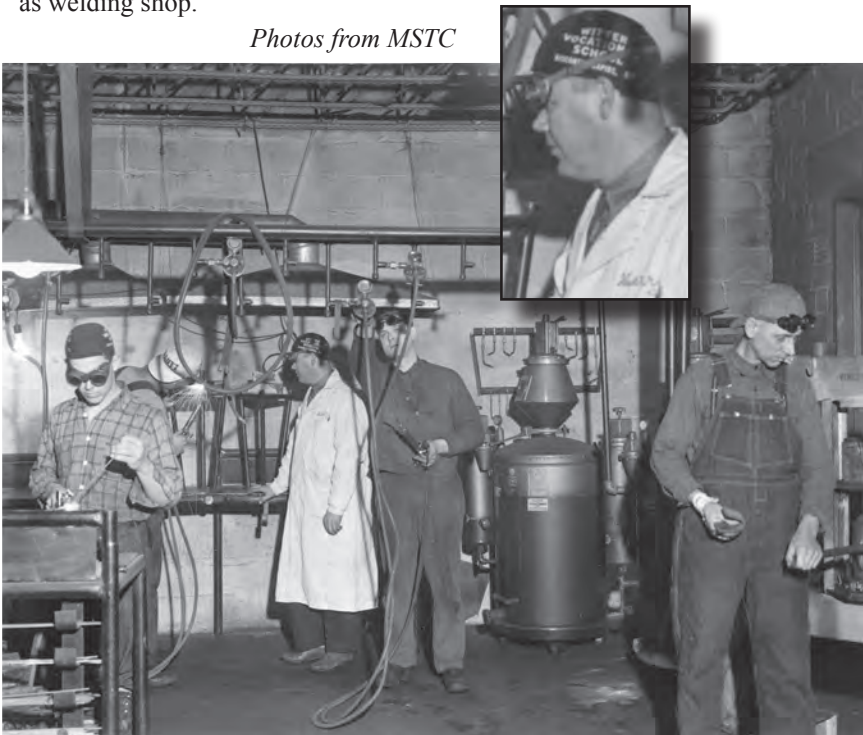


Garages used to be smaller!



Wood County Agricultural Shop located behind Vocational School and used as welding shop.

*Photos from MSTC*



1949 Harry Lee and welding class. See enlargement of cap.





Auto Mechanics, 1949, Earl Sherman teacher?

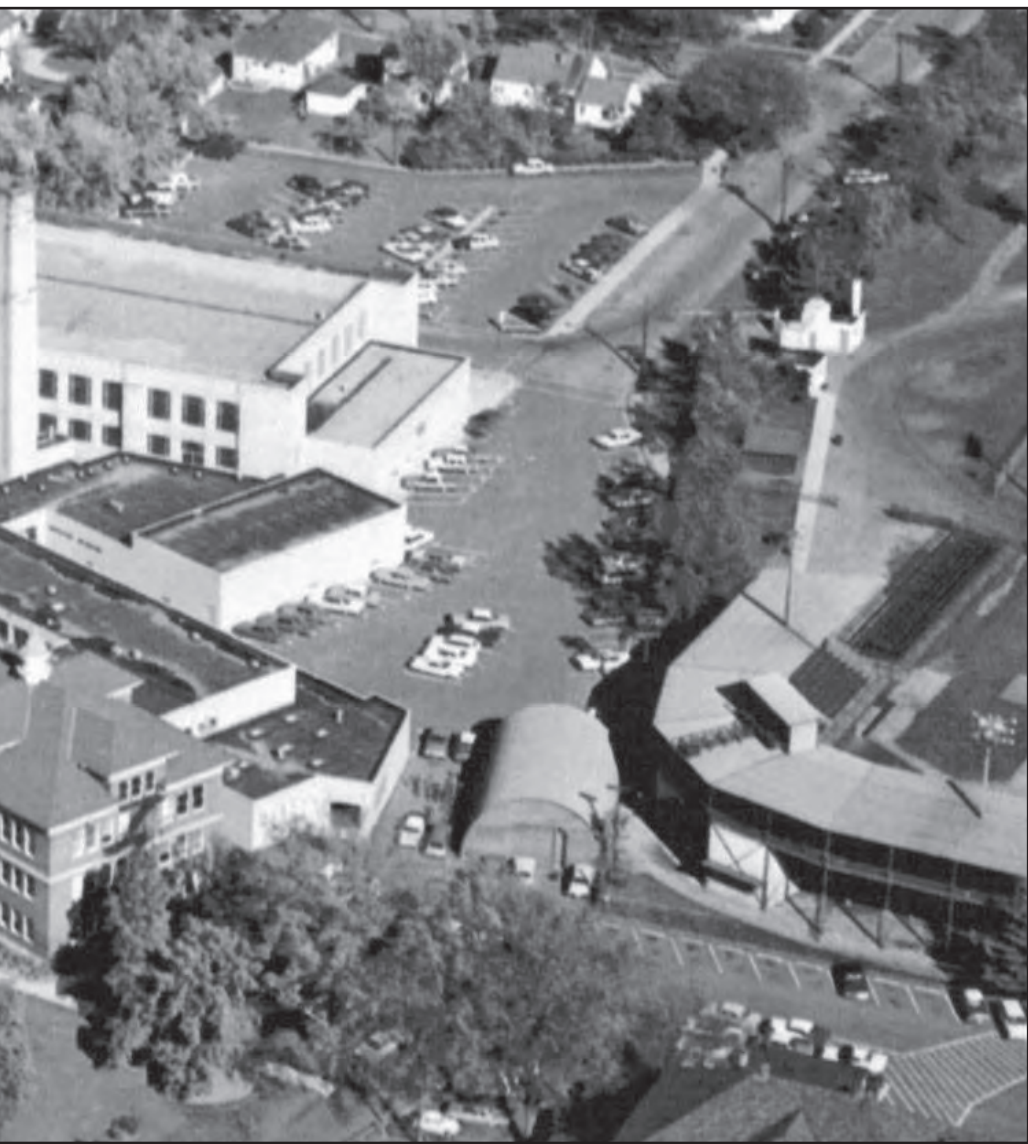


Carpentry class? Frank Henry, center right. See enlargement of sign.



**Wisconsin Rapids Campus c. 1970**

*SWCHC*



From left: 1962 Board of Education addition; 1931 Lincoln High School (Later, Wisconsin Rapids Junior High School); 1931 Lincoln Field House; 1957 Vocational/Band addition; 1907 Witter Vocational School; 1941 Quonset building; 1950 Witter baseball field; 1908 Wood County Teachers College (barely visible, bottom right). Also visible at right above, entrance to Witter field and to the grandstand, below.





Vocational School in Witter Building welcomes students in the pre-“Mid-State” 1960s. Above right, lad at “bookstore” appears to sport a post-Beatles (1964) hair-do. Right, Wilbert Knobeck instructs in modern approaches to auto mechanics.

*Photos from MSTC*







1964 class meets at Johnson-Hill store, Wisconsin Rapids



As the Vocational School moved toward Mid-State era career-oriented education, cooperation increased with local business and industry and "Home Ec" was just as likely to have become "marketing."



James Moore with a Vocational School accounting class.



Typewriters, probably in the addition connecting Lincoln High School and the Vocational School – same room the editor typing these words learned the skill at a summer session in 1960.



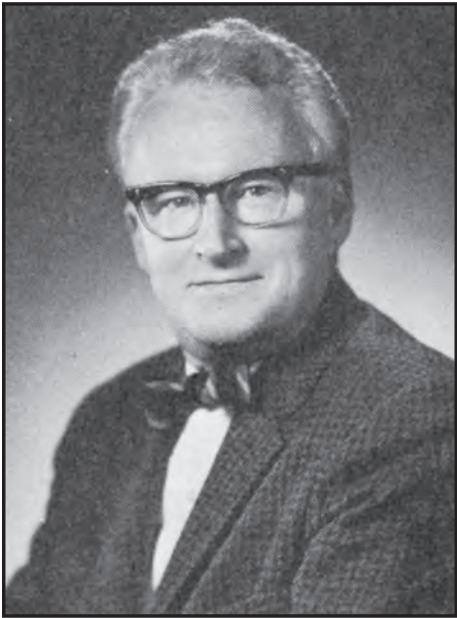


Photos on these pages are from the 1960s, in the waning days of the Vocational School. Above, Blaine Pederson, Business Instructor. *MSTC Archives*



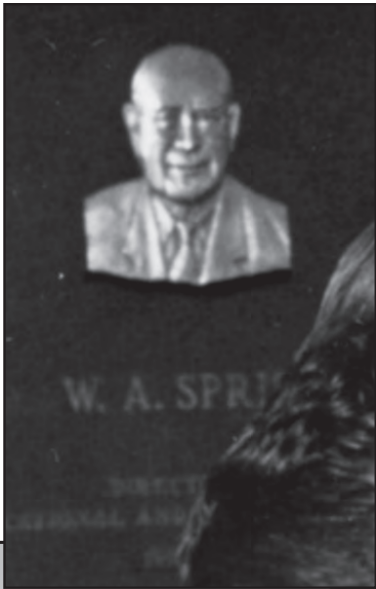
RELAXATION

Student lounge in the  
Witter Building - Wisconsin  
Rapid City



Left: Earl Jaeger, 1975  
District 14 Director, 1967-81

W.A. Sprise plaque  
Vocational School Director,  
1919-1961



*MSTC Photos*

Below: Registration at Witter building  
(detail enlarged)





Probably at Marshfield Purdy Building



Mel Schneeberg, District 14 Director, 1981-1995

## **Mid-State & Me**

By Holly Knoll

**M**y older sister, Karin Brier, and I graduated from college the same semester, December 2008. My major was Social Science with a minor in Anthropology. She graduated with a major in Supervisory Management. My alma mater was the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point; hers was Mid-State Technical College-Wisconsin Rapids. We are both now employed in the fields we focused on.

Although I did not attend Mid-State, I find myself connected to the school in many ways.

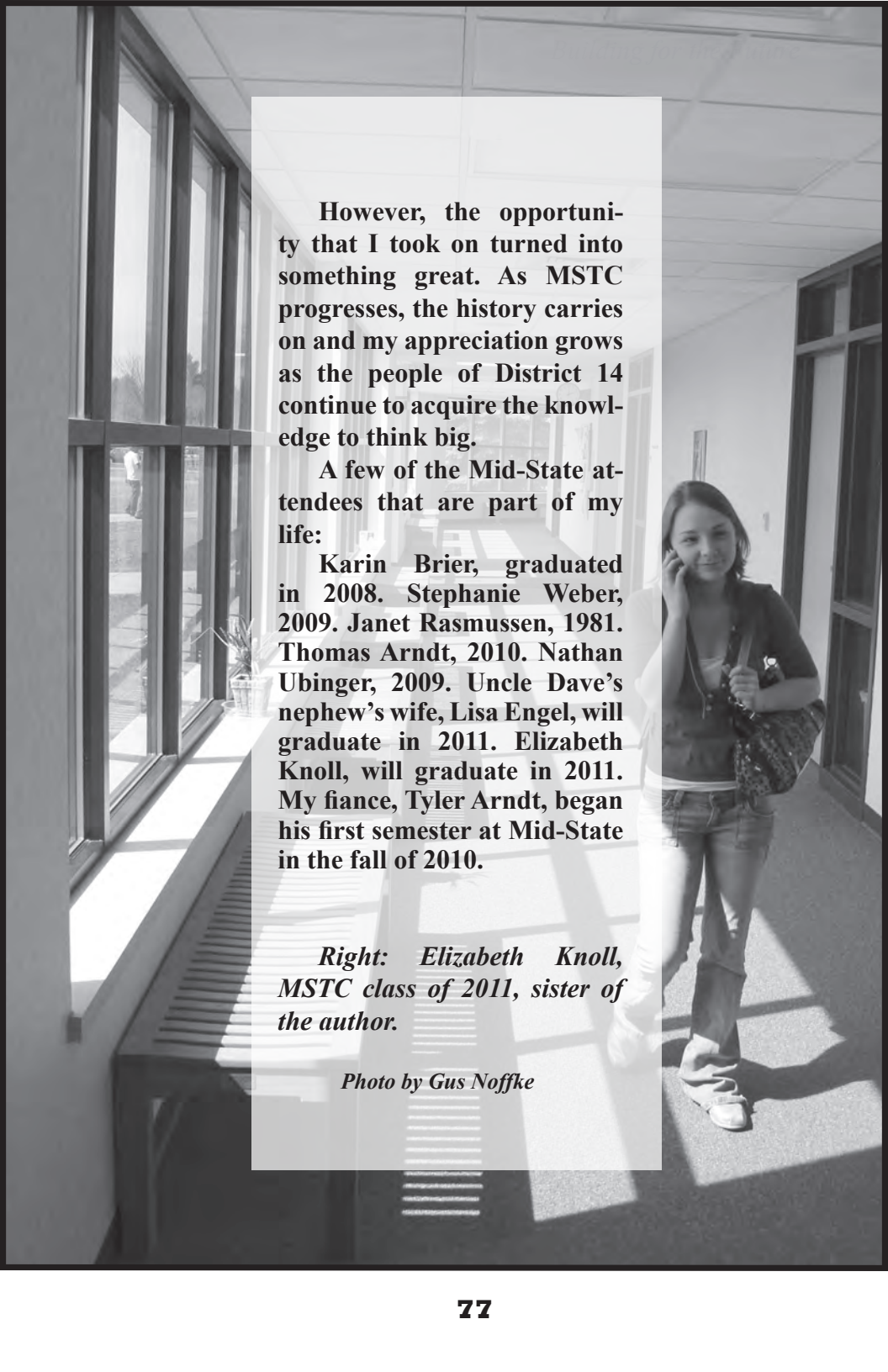
I grew up in the Mid-State neighborhood around 32nd and Washington streets on the east side of Wisconsin Rapids. As youngsters, my sisters and I rode our bikes over to the campus to explore. We didn't know much about Mid-State. All we knew is that we were young and adventurous and enjoyed finding the ponds and running through the soccer fields.

As we got a little older, my younger sister, Elizabeth, began going to daycare at Tiny Tech while my mother attended some of the Mid-State courses. I remember occasionally picking up my sister from the child-filled room in the college that she too would one day attend.

As I came into my senior year of high school, I began to see an increasing number of my peers being accepted to Mid-State. I heard numerous great comments about the school and saw the results in the jobs that my friends were able to attain shortly after graduation. Many even kept the jobs at the same business that they had just interned for just a short while before.

A few years later, as I sat in "Uncle" Dave's office, I was given the opportunity to co-author a book about the history of Mid-State Technical College. There was little hesitation on my part as I accepted the offer. MSTC has had such an impact on my friends and family that I knew this would be a good thing.





However, the opportunity that I took on turned into something great. As MSTC progresses, the history carries on and my appreciation grows as the people of District 14 continue to acquire the knowledge to think big.

A few of the Mid-State attendees that are part of my life:

Karin Brier, graduated in 2008. Stephanie Weber, 2009. Janet Rasmussen, 1981. Thomas Arndt, 2010. Nathan Ubinger, 2009. Uncle Dave's nephew's wife, Lisa Engel, will graduate in 2011. Elizabeth Knoll, will graduate in 2011. My fiancé, Tyler Arndt, began his first semester at Mid-State in the fall of 2010.

*Right: Elizabeth Knoll, MSTC class of 2011, sister of the author.*

*Photo by Gus Noffke*

# Building for the Future

*How educational pioneers made it happen.*

## Conflicts and Challenges

Getting it all into book form: the project was inspired, according to outgoing president John Clark, by longtime MSTC board member and advocate Dan Meyer, who said something should be done while first-person accounts were still available. Consequently, co-author Dave Engel began a series of interviews that became this broad and entertaining narrative.

Conflicts are overcome and challenges met as a small town vocational school progresses to a state-of-art college that has earned a national reputation for delivering flexible, innovative, and relevant education to the contemporary workforce.

## Idealism and Leadership

“Mid-State Technical College is the product of great ideas and practical action,” concludes Engel, Wisconsin Rapids City Historian and a former adult education instructor. “MSTC began with the lofty idealism of the early 20th Century and continues at the highest level through the farsighted and pragmatic leadership of the early 21st Century.”





### **For the Future**

Photo provided by Flad Architects, Madison, shows Mid-State's Wisconsin Rapids campus being developed. The process required building for the future on many levels – political, social, educational, and structural.

## **MSTC**

By Holly Knoll & Dave Engel

The two-year postsecondary system that came to include Mid-State began in the 1930s with junior colleges that offered college-transfer programs, according to former MSTC director and president Mel Schneeberg. The junior colleges grew dramatically as World War II veterans eligible for schooling under the G.I. bill of 1944 returned to civilian life.

Initially, most junior colleges were housed in high schools. As the movement grew, facilities were added to accommodate the offerings, Schneeberg said. In some cases, stand-alone community colleges followed. But leaders of the State of Wisconsin preferred their two-year colleges to be, not the community colleges of surrounding states, but branch campuses of the University of Wisconsin.

As new educational institutions were to be located in mid-20th Century, many of the same rivalries arose that had colored the 18th Century and the siting of railroads, highways, county seats, and colleges.

### **Turf Battle #1: Marshfield**

UW-Marshfield's own website tells the story. How, in the late 1950s, the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents worked with a State Coordinating Committee for Higher Education to determine locations for two-year extension campuses. The State would fund faculty, equipment, and other needs if local governments paid for construction and maintenance of the buildings.

In southeast Wood County, Wisconsin Rapids wanted the University extension, as did its rival, Marshfield, in the northwest corner. Marshfield's business and political leaders promised a brand new building accompanied by financial support, whereas Wisconsin Rapids preferred to remodel an older building and spread the cost among the adjoining towns and villages. After debate at the county board level, Wood County offered the Board

of Regents either city's site and the Board, along with the Coordinating Committee, decided in favor of Marshfield.

At a later date, State Representative Marlin Schneider stated, "What I was told was that State Senator W.W. Clark used his influence to have the center placed in Marshfield, even though it was originally designated for Wisconsin Rapids." The Marshfield administration building is named for Clark, a former Vesper, Wis. resident.

Besides the offer of a new building and Clark's putative influence, other factors influenced the final decision. Rapids was closer to Wisconsin State College at Stevens Point to which its residents could commute. Marshfield provided a broader rural service area that included western Marathon County, eastern Clark County, and northern Wood County. Finally, the availability of the Marshfield Clinic and St. Joseph's Hospital provided resources for developing a desirable nursing program.

Ground breaking took place in the fall of 1963.

## **Chapter 38**

**F**ormer Mid-State Board president Dan Meyer recalled that, at the outset, Wisconsin Rapids leaders Art Hayward, Milt Schneider, and Paul Fleming hoped the UW Extension would be assigned to Wisconsin Rapids. "Plan B was Wisconsin Rapids putting in a bid for a community college. Given that there was a four-year college at Stevens Point, this probably wouldn't be what we should go for. Plan C was to get approved as a technical district."

In 1965, the Wisconsin legislature passed Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 38 which gave the Wisconsin vocational system institutional validity and provided specific direction for programming in individual districts. The law stated that the Wisconsin Vocational, Technical, and Adult Education board, "shall be responsible for the initiation, development, maintenance and supervision of programs within specific occupational orientations below the baccalaureate level, including terminal associate degrees, training of apprentices and adult education below the professional level." Schneeberg said that Chapter 38 enabled associate degree, one

and two-year vocational diploma, and apprentice programs to be developed at the Wisconsin Rapids campus; and it became the statutory guide for all future Mid-State programming.

Also in 1965, the Wisconsin Rapids Common Council authorized the then-named School of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education (VTAE) to expand into the Wood County Teachers College building, which was to be abandoned after June. VTAE would be able to include more post-high school courses, such as the newly-conceived civil technology and instrumentation.

### **Turf Battle #2: Wausau**

As explained by Wisconsin Rapids District lawyer Lawrence Nash, Chapter 38 set off a political “turf battle.” “The State had ordered that all parts of the state would be included in a vocational school district [by 1970] as they had done previously with regard to the public schools having K-12 coverage.”

The Wisconsin Rapids Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education quickly presented a plan for a Rapids-centered district to include all of Wood, Portage, Juneau, Adams and Marquette counties and the portions of Waushara County which are in the Plainfield Tri-County, Wild Rose, and Wautoma school districts.

But C.L. Greiber, director of the state Department of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education, told the Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* a three-member committee was still working on guidelines for the number of technical districts and where the “epicenters” would be located.

Portage County interests had already told Greiber they would rather be associated with the Wausau epicenter than with Rapids and were even considering whether to bid for a regional school of their own. The Wisconsin Rapids portion of Wood and Adams Counties were determined to continue as a district whether or not neighboring areas joined.

Eldon Everetts, director of the Rapids VTAE school, announced that the original 20 districts to be created had dropped to only 10-15, each of which would require a minimum population base of 100,000. That seemed to be good news.



State Sen. William C. Hansen, Stevens Point, Assemblymen Harvey Gee, Wisconsin Rapids, and Raymond F. Heinzen, Marshfield, pledged support to Rapids. Hansen said he envisioned a district that included Wood, Portage and Clark counties, parts of Waushara, and other counties to the south. He knew that, without the population base of his Portage County, Wisconsin Rapids might not be chosen as a district center.

Proponents in south Wood County pointed to Wisconsin Department of Resource Development statistics released in April 1966: manufacturing jobs per 1,000 of population in the 72 counties, based on 1964 population. Wood County came in sixth with 156 per 1,000, making it a good fit for factory/school interaction.

Wood was the only county in the Wisconsin River Valley among the top six, where most manufacturing jobs were in the paper mill towns of Wisconsin Rapids, Port Edwards, Nekoosa, and Biron and not in the northern part of Wood County adjacent to Marshfield.

When criteria became available, also in 1966, minimum standards were floated that required districts contain a population of 237,500, with at least 3,800 high school graduates each year, and that districts be able to construct and provide tax support for a central vocational technical school with a minimum full-time enrollment of 920.

Richard Whinfield, Assistant State Vocational Director, said that between 12 and 15 district schools could be eligible, about the number Everetts had earlier estimated. Only six existing schools met the criteria and three or four more were expected to qualify by 1970. However, the guideline committee recommended population requirements be lessened in some northern areas in order for three to five center schools to be designated in that area.

Local VTAE Director Everetts believed standards then in play, if adopted strictly, would oust Wisconsin Rapids as epicenter. Population added up to only 155,000 between seven counties, with 2,800 annual high school graduates. Everetts thought that, by 1975, the district would be able to reach an enrollment of at least 900 and would be able to function. Characteristically, as the process unfolded in a haphazard sequence, Rapids leaders continued with plans underway to improve their physical plant.

Meanwhile, Marshfield Mayor Anderson B. Conner was sounding like a Pointer, saying he wanted to join the Wausau district immediately. Other Marshfield leaders wanted to wait until after the State hearing of that year.

Marshfield vacillation was somewhat put to rest when, at an October 3 meeting in Stevens Point, it was proposed that Wisconsin Rapids would indeed head District 14. In February 1967, the Marshfield Common Council agreed to affiliate with Rapids to improve “both liberal arts and vocational education” in Wood County. Under chairman Hayward’s leadership, the Wood County Board also went on record seeking early approval.

A State sub-committee, headed by Joseph Noll of Kenosha, was charged with making adjustments to fringe areas and connecting them with neighboring districts. Each district, once formed, would then have at least one vocational, technical, and adult educational institute and a board to “administer it and levy taxes to support the schools.” The recommendations still needed approval by the State Board and the Coordinating Committee for Higher Education.

### **Turf Battle #3: Stevens Point**

Stevens Point, chronically tied to Wausau by its most vocal leaders, next moved to create one big “super-district,” rather than join Wisconsin Rapids and its “marginal” campus. Within the superdistrict, Wisconsin Rapids and Wausau could each have two-year schools with one-year schools in Marshfield and Point.

Rapids argued that splitting Point students between Rapids and Wausau would only impede the development of the first-class school in progress and pointed out that Wausau was already \$4.5 million in debt through their own new expansion. Wausau’s state and federal monies were allocated for the next couple of years which could affect other schools forced to join the Marathon County center of District 15.

In June 1967, the State VTAE Board rejected Portage County’s “secessionist arguments” and the Coordinating Committee for Higher Education upheld the board’s findings. According to this proclamation, Stevens Point would be included in District 14 based in Wisconsin Rapids on the July 1, 1970 entry date.

When the Wisconsin Rapids Vocational, Technical and Adult Education school became District 14, said Schneeberg, “the real scramble to create a district began.”

The transition from Witter Vocational School to Mid-State Technical Institute involved, more than the siting of brick and mortar, a curricular and instructional challenge. The institution was making a major step up from high school-level to postsecondary instruction. Having been named a district, administrators were faced with immediate and increasing responsibilities. In a short period of time, emerging programs required application of expertise; staff needed to be recruited and employed; curricula had to be updated; facilities had to be modified.

Those who accepted the challenge, grew with the system, Schneeberg said. Those who resisted, fell by the wayside.

### **First District Board**

**UW**-Madison grad Daniel P. Meyer, first chairman of the District VTAE board, had come to Wisconsin Rapids in 1951 to work for Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. “Art Hayward was on the county board and heard all these debates and arguments for community, tech school, university extensions, so on and so on,” Meyer said.

“I remember getting a call at my office at Consolidated from Art. He said, ‘Wood County is gonna go ahead and form a district here and you’re going to be on the board. And I’ll tell you who else is gonna be on that. That young guy that works in the Clinic Foundation up in Marshfield: Fritz Wenzel. He’d be a good one and we should have a farmer on. That’ll take care of Marshfield.’ The farmer was going to be Joe Weber. And then we’ll have somebody from Labor here and he got Lloyd Mitchell. Then we had to have a superintendent of public schools and that would be Ray Clausen. And then we’ll get somebody from Preway, which was really going in those days, and that’ll be Wes Snyder, and then Nekoosa Papers.

“And that was it, he said, ‘and we’ll make the district Wood County.’”

The new District 14 Board held its organizational meeting July 1, 1967, and proceeded quickly with resolutions to seat members, elect board officers, designate an official meeting place, and most importantly, to transfer all local vocational school assets, property, claims, contracts and obligations. It was resolved that the legal name for the new district would be Area Vocational, Technical and Adult Education District 14.

The AVTAED 14 Board also named Jack Murphy, Marshfield Vocational School Director, as Acting District Director.

### **Jaeger**

The first permanent Director, Earl F. Jaeger, 52, accepted his position in July 1967 but was unavailable until September 15, because of his position as head of the Racine Vocational school. His family would not join him in Wisconsin Rapids until 1968.

Jaeger's professional background included a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Marquette University and a Master's degree in guidance and counseling from UW-Madison. He had served the Milwaukee Public school system as a consultant and was a guidance counselor for Marquette University prior to accepting the Racine vocational school position in 1957. He had also worked as a plumber and served in the U.S. Army.

The delay in Jaeger's arrival resulted in the Board's assigning to Eldon Everetts, Director of the Wisconsin Rapids school, responsibility for conducting the fall in-service program. It was not until the in-service program between semesters that the new director was able to meet with the entire District staff.

Out of a rented office in the Wood County Courthouse, the new Director viewed his task. The District needed a comprehensive accounting system and processes for handling payroll, purchasing, and personnel files. Operational policies and procedures had to be developed and the nuances of the District's cultural geography and political structure learned. He had to get to know county board members, mayors, school superintendents, and local business personalities.

By the end of the first year, Director Jaeger had established the basic infrastructure of the District. Budgetary processes were

in place, purchasing procedures established, basic personnel policies administered, taxes levied, and the administrative structure, which included the Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield schools, was emerging.

Long time director of the Marshfield school, Jack Murphy, retired, and was replaced by James Olson, Superintendent of the Pittsville school district.

Rapids director Everetts departed for the Minnesota Vocational system; but first, in June 1967, he made the first administrative hire, one month before the district was actually formed, by hiring Mel Schneeberg, a Portage county native, for the Trade and Industry coordinator's position. Schneeberg reported for duties in August, just ahead of Jaeger and one month after the District was legally established.

Schneeberg held both a Master's and Bachelor's degree from UW-Stout. He had worked for two consulting engineering firms, and had five years of collegiate teaching experience, as an assistant professor at Middle Tennessee State University and an instructor at UW-Stout. He and Jaeger were the only staff members with actual college teaching experience. Schneeberg also taught while serving in the U.S. Air Force.

### **More Space**

**T**he *Milwaukee Sentinel* reported on July 13, 1967, that the need for vocational schools in Wisconsin had grown dramatically in the past decade as full-time students came to learn job skills. Projections showed that by 1970 enrollment would be up by 34 percent and up by 98 percent by 1980. Most schools did not have plans in place to expand their facilities in order to cope with the influx. To meet the state's rapidly growing need for facilities would take between \$43.2 and \$59.8 million in the next five years. The "resources" report suggested that the state increase their aids so that local funds could be used for construction purposes.

In line with the Sentinel's report, the District 14 VTAE Board hoped that by April 1969, Mid-State would be breaking ground for a new facility to be ready in the fall of 1971. A letter of intent

to build a new Technical Institute in Wisconsin Rapids was filed with the State director. In April 1968, a Building Committee of Meyer, Chairman, Lloyd Mitchell, Joe Weber, and F. Wenzel, *ex-officio*, collected information on parcels of land of at least 100 acres with available sewer, water, gas, electrical service, and easy access to major highway and roads. Seven sites were considered of which it was found three had been committed to other uses.

The first acreage viewed was located on South Biron Drive (now the site of Wellington Place) and owned by Mrs. Arlington C. Krause and her brother. The land was along the river but mostly high and dry, wrote Mrs. Krause in a Jan. 14, 1969, letter to Jaeger, adding that other lots along the river front had been sold for \$1,500 to \$3,000. The committee also looked at a property on Chestnut Street east, owned by Phillip D. Miller, and 30 acres across from the Town Hall in Grand Rapids, owned by Herb Nichols.

### **Boundary Line**

Soon after Plainfield Tri-County joined District 14, more areas followed suit. Almond, in southeastern Portage County, was the second entity outside Wood County to request inclusion. Amherst, in eastern Portage County, followed. But Wild Rose, Waushara County, Marquette, Portage, Juneau, Wonegan, New Lisbon, Necedah, Mauston, and Elroy-Kendall asked to join other districts closer to their communities or with what they considered better facilities. It was another in what was to be a lengthy list of potentially fatal threats. If these areas were allowed to withdraw, District 14 might not be able to keep enough students to operate a full technical program.

In 1969, as a final decision by the State VTAE board approached, five alternatives were being considered for a technical school district in mid- and north-central Wisconsin: maintaining present boundaries; attaching Wood County to District 15, Wausau; setting up both technical and liberal arts course schedules at Wisconsin Rapids; "going it alone" by Wood County and other small districts; and operating a three-county base district comprising Wood, Portage, and Marathon Counties.



South Wood County, as the most populous area in Wisconsin that did not have a two-year or four-year college-level educational establishment, continued to believe it deserved to host the vocational district. Portage County already was sending 31 students to Wisconsin Rapids while only 22 were attending Wausau.

### **Silverman**

Portage County Board member David Silverman would prove a tenacious and long-standing adversary of Wisconsin Rapids interests. In the early 1960s, he had helped establish the Central Wisconsin Airport at Mosinee, between Wausau and Stevens Point, against the opposition of much of Wood County, for which the location was insultingly inconvenient and reminiscent of an 1800s railroad from Rapids to Wausau – that bypassed Point.

In a playful coincidence of history, Silverman, long associated with Stevens Point's radio station WSPT, had an experience in March 1954 that brought his name together with that of a youth who would later figure in MSTC history.

Silverman was in the radio studio, broadcasting a celebration for the P.J. Jacobs High School basketball team that had just won the state championship, when an alarm bell rang, signaling that the station was off the air. He and another worker rushed to an adjacent room and found engineer Robert A. Tellekson unconscious and transported him to the hospital, where he died, having been electrocuted.

The story of the WSPT incident occupies far right on the front page, adjacent to a large photo of the P.J. Jacobs championship team itself. The player closest to the Silverman story is #44, Mel Schneeberg, future director of District 14.

### **Turf Battle #4**

Continuing to move ahead, the Wisconsin Rapids school would offer full-time vocational programs and one-year courses in Wood Technics and Medical Assistance. The upgrade of status would “provide MTI [also called MSTI] with an opportunity to request approval of and to offer programs which it previously was

unable to provide,” said Jaeger. It was hoped the upgrades would encourage opponents to get on board. In the spring of 1969, Stevens Point VTAE school director Howard Michalsen, who still preferred a super-district, opined that, by joining sooner rather than later, Point interests could probably get two or three of the six seats on the board and take part in the initial District 14 planning. Nevertheless, he and the Stevens Point VTAE board, persuaded by Silverman, decided to hold out and not join District 14.

Frederick Wenzel, District 14 Board Chairman, explained that he had reached out to Stevens Point school officials to effect rapprochement but had not received a response. That brought then-named Wisconsin State University-Stevens Point Chancellor Lee Sherman Dreyfus to the fray.

The Wisconsin Governor-to-be was a Milwaukee native with a red vest and big ideas who introduced himself to the University community by saying, “My initials are LSD, and we’re going to take a trip together.” Dreyfus, who envisioned Marshfield, Stevens Point and Wisconsin Rapids together in one “ruralplex,” stepped in to help ease tension between the rivals. He convinced some skeptics in Point that Rapids had passed all needed evaluations to become the newly-named “Mid-State Technical Institute.”

Silverman remained adamant. Any decision to keep most of Portage County in District 14, he claimed, was political and not educational. No one doubted it.

Jaeger’s wife, Lorraine, later recalled, “We came up and there was a struggle to keep the District. The District director up in Wausau wanted this to be a 200-mile district.” Schneeberg later said, “the issue was not about education. It was simply an attempt to transfer the Wood County tax base to the Wausau Vocational district.”

### **Washkovick**

Another piece of land the building committee became interested in was located in the town of Grand Rapids at 32nd and Washington Streets. The former 155 acre farm was owned by Minnie and Sylvester Washkovick, whose Polish name suggested a kinship with the highly ethnic Portage County. Indeed,

Minnie Mancheski of Stevens Point and Washkovick of Neshkoro had been married in 1937 and had been operating a farm just outside the "Point" side of Wisconsin Rapids in the 1940s and 1950s. They had been regular advertisers in the classified section of the Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune*, offering to sell cattle and poultry from their East Washington Street address.

The committee contacted the landowners numerous times, finding Mrs. Washkovick reluctant to discuss their proposals, but her husband more interested. At a Feb. 11, 1970, meeting with Building Committee members Meyer, Weber, and Mitchell, the Washkovicks were told that the land, if acquired, would be home to the new Vocational Technical School. Learning that Minnie wanted her property used for an orphanage, the committee reminded her that the institutions, in recent years, had been closed in favor of placement in foster homes. It was a selling point that a technical school would also help young people.

By this time, Mid-State and the Committee were sure that the Washkovick property would be an excellent home for the new campus. It had the potential to accommodate future expansion and was only two miles from Highway 54 and other major city thoroughfares. The land, although flat, was aesthetically appealing, with a forest-like setting and a pine plantation that would be kept intact.

The death of Minnie's brother, Alexander Mancheski, of the State Department foreign service division, a Stevens Point native and graduate of the state university there, set back negotiations by a couple of weeks. The District brought in G. R. Viele of V-Lee Realty, Inc. to help reach accord with Minnie.

In late 1969, Viele told Meyer that the Washkovicks would sell but wanted to retain two to four acres where their homestead was situated. Another concern was that they believed one-third of the sale price would be taken by the Government in the form of capital gains tax. Viele suggested, "it would be an intelligent approach to offer him his money over a two to three year period, thus eliminating a good share of his tax."

On Sept. 9, 1970, Wenzel and Meyer signed the mortgage and the land was purchased from Sylvester and Minnie for a some-

what controversial \$108,000, or approximately \$697 an acre, about ten times its assessed value, though well within the average paid for technical school sites. The initial payment was \$21,200.

In order to develop the property, Mid-State needed the city of Wisconsin Rapids to approve sewer and water service to cross 32nd Street into the Town of Grand Rapids, which Rapids mayor and MSTC advocate Donald Penza expedited. "The District 14 VTAE Board would soon begin the task that they have waited years to see the realization of," said the Dec. 17, 1969, *Daily Tribune*.

The Board estimated that the project would cost around \$2.5 million and could be completed within a couple of years. But how would they pay for it?

Federal aids, which had provided between 40 and 50 percent of building costs, were being cut to around 20 to 25 percent. Only \$1 million was being allocated to be used between four VTAE districts, distributed via a complicated formula that took into account local tax effort, full-time enrollment, and manpower needs of business and industry. According to state findings, MSTI was only being utilized at about 47 percent of its capacity, though it was not thought that this would hurt its chances of funding. In order to help in planning efforts, the board was directed to look at other districts that had recently built schools.

## Referendum

After four years of discussion, it was official and believed to be permanent: District 14 would include the school districts of Wisconsin Rapids, Port Edwards, Nekoosa, Pittsville, Auburndale, Marshfield, Plainfield Tri-County, Almond, Amherst, Stevens Point, Adams-Friendship and Granton. Wenzel reported that the 1969 equalized valuation of the twelve entities would be about \$860 million. Meyer welcomed Stevens Point and urged immediate cooperation between the two cities.

Two months after purchasing the Washkovick site, the board chose the architectural firm of John J. Flad & Associates, Madison, to design a new 1,000-student Mid-State Technical Institute facility. Flad had built some 300 educational buildings, includ-

ing the showplace Waukesha County Technical Institute, and designed other buildings in the District 14 area, such as Riverview Hospital in Wisconsin Rapids.

The project was going to cost \$3 to \$4 million instead of the original \$2.5 million. Spending amounts over \$500,000 had to be bonded, approved by the State and approved by local residents by referendum to “authorize the issuance of not more than \$3.9 million of general obligation bonds for the purpose of acquiring a site and construction and equipping a Vocational, Technical and Adult Education School.” The new plans would condense the campus into one building instead of working out of the five old buildings that included the former Witter Manual Training School and Wood County Teachers College.

Silverman, the District 14 VTAE Board member from Stevens Point and William Hansen, Stevens Point Board of Education president, contended that they were not against vocational education itself but that, as proposed, Mid-State, at 175,000 square feet, was too large, considering uncertain enrollment increases and possible state reorganization of VTAE districts.

Speaking for MSTI, Wenzel and Meyer thought they had found the perfect time to build. The Wisconsin Rapids campus was running out of space and bond interest rates were very low. Meyer said that, if the referendum weren’t passed, he didn’t know where they were going to put the students. The old buildings were deteriorating and becoming more cramped every year.

Wenzel noted that, in the four VTAE districts that had built new schools, enrollment increased by over 21 percent a year and more than 158 percent over a three year span. With “half of the job openings in the 1970s requiring post high school education of less than a four-year program,” District leaders worked hard to educate the community on the benefits of a favorable referendum. A pamphlet observed that the eight out of ten students who did not select or complete collegiate training also deserved an opportunity for advanced training. Many enrolled at a technical institute could not attend school unless they commuted.

District 14’s full-time enrollment had more than doubled since 1967. By 1975, the school would enroll over 750 full-time students and by 1980, over 1,100. VTAE was the fastest growing

educational program in Wisconsin. Non-availability of programs, mainly due to lack of facilities, was costing the District \$80,000 per year in tuition payments and loss of state aids.

The pamphlet also explained that the tax increase on a \$15,000 home would be only 75 cents per year in 1972, \$1.20 in 1974, \$2.06 in 1980, and \$1.10 in 1989.

Despite the effort of the Wisconsin Rapids community, on April 6, 1971, the vote was 16,365 against the bond to 11,753 in favor. Wood was the only county that tallied a majority of 'yes' votes. The referendum had failed.

Silverman was quick to respond. "I think the people of Portage County particularly were saying something yesterday. When we fought the battle to have our county released from District 14 in the first place our opponents said over and over again it was only a few people in Portage County who objected to being included. Our inclusion in District 14 was imposed on us and the first time the people of Portage County had a chance to express their view. They expressed it with a thundering 90 percent no vote."

### **Revised Plan**

Schneeberg recalls the defeated referendum as a low point for the district. Earl Jaeger and the entire staff knew the district had a real problem because industrial programs needed more space. Without added space, the school would have to curtail enrollments and function without the needed laboratories. "It was at this point that I met with Director Jaeger and suggested that we build the Industrial complex rather than the entire campus."

Director Jaeger didn't think the Board would be willing to move forward and believed the entire building question should be tabled until some future date. However, he allowed Schneeberg to meet with Building Chairman Meyer.

"We discussed the two basic reasons for going forth with a plan to build the Industrial complex. The first was that the district had adequate funds needed to build the initial building. The concept would lead to a phased building program. Bonding for the building would not be required. It was understood that the referendum was for bonding, not for building.



“The second point was that the new building, if constructed, would enable programs that were now scattered at three different locations to be brought together under one roof. It would also enable Lincoln High School to expand into badly-needed space that was shared with MSTI.

“Chairman Meyer realized the significance of moving forward and immediately brought the issue to the full board. He moved forward with determination, and I believe that he is the one who should receive credit for salvaging the district’s building program. Without Meyer’s involvement, the building program might have been delayed several years.”

### **Options**

**A**fter the referendum defeat, Reinhart Postweiler, vice president of John J. Flad and Associates, met with the District Board and outlined three options. The first was dropping the building program and losing \$60,000 already obligated to Flad and others. The second option was to amend the plan, reducing the cost of construction by \$900,000, which would minimize “losses” to about \$10,000. The third option was to start all over and suffer a loss of approximately \$41,000 already spent on planning.

If the District chose the revised plan, architects could salvage most of the previous plan and most of the District’s initial investment. It would keep the mall-type design but with reduced shop and classroom space. The chief architect, Emil Korenic, explained that the building process could be in progressive steps. Parts of the cafeteria and lounge areas could be used for classroom purposes until more space could be added.

“That was in the spring of the year but we still had \$500,000 in the bank for a building program,” said Meyer, “and we said, ‘Why don’t we just go ahead and take another look at this thing and we’ll have to re-plan and maybe build one building at a time? Which one’s the most desperately needed?’ We had the two auto mechanics buildings that were in dire need.

“About the first building, someone said, ‘You can’t do that.’ We said, ‘Why can’t we do that?’ so we went ahead and built the one building.”

Wenzel declared that “planning must go on. We must have a place for all of the students who want to go to school. This must come first. There must be a great deal of soul searching, of honesty, and discussions.” Point’s Silverman, continuing steadfast opposition to the Rapids campus, said construction should be deferred, pending rumored action that the State VTAE Board could, even after the numerous decisions already made, consolidate Districts 14 and 15.

### **Accreditation**

**I**n the evolution from vocational school to technical college and the determined progression from plans to action, accreditation by a nationally-recognized body became a necessary component. Following the final definition of district boundaries, Area VTAE District 14 prepared an “Institutional Analysis Report for Correspondent Status” for the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (NCA), headquartered in Chicago.

The accreditation process used by NCA required the institution being evaluated to: take an in-depth look at its philosophy and operation; undergo a visitation by a team of trained NCA evaluators; and receive an evaluation report containing strengths, areas of concern, suggestions, and opportunities for improvement. The report also contained a recommendation for the length of time before the next self-study and visitation was required, hopefully ten years, the maximum possible.

Accreditation brought advantages, said Schneeberg, including added value to the degrees granted; recognition to the institution for meeting criteria of similar post-secondary institutions; eligibility for a variety of federal funding, including that of students for federal financial aid; and prestige, particularly since several other Wisconsin technical institutes were already accredited.

Director Jaeger had previously corresponded with NCA and was requested to meet with accreditation officials in Chicago. Board records show that on July 8, 1971, Jaeger and Schneeberg traveled to Chicago to start the institutional accreditation

process. During this meeting the District was to make a formal presentation to the Commission's assistant executive director, Dr. Tom Gillis.

After hearing the District's presentation and after asking numerous questions, Dr. Gillis recommended that Mid-State make formal application to the Commission for Correspondent status. It was the first step of a process that would take several years to complete. Schneeberg recalls that "We were elated with our success, for it marked our acceptance as a truly-founded postsecondary institution."

### **Meanwhile, Changes**

As vocational, technical and adult education continued, within the political context, to take place in Wisconsin Rapids and District 14, numerous social changes would become increasingly important. One example of a national attitude change reflected here was the lessening of gender roles. In the early 1970s, men almost always enrolled in classes such as mechanics, electronics, and machine technology, while women chose cooking, decoupage, and secretarial science. It came as a surprise to Home Economics teacher Libby Rosandick when Don Barse strolled into her "Cooking for Two" class in 1970.

It was the second time this class was offered and the first time a male had enrolled. When James Gibbs joined 14 pupils in the evening decoupage class, the instructor, Patricia Mills, said it was also the first such class in which a male had enrolled. Other classes that saw more males present were outdoor grilling and baking. Likewise, in the mid-1970s, more females joined male-dominated classes such as woodworking and auto mechanics.

### **G.I. Bill**

The 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act, better known as the G.I. Bill of Rights or G.I. Bill, helped millions of veterans receive federal support for higher education. A similar bill was passed by Congress for Vietnam War veterans.

Mid-State had about 60 veterans enrolled in various programs in 1971 and was told by the U.S. Veterans Administration to cut

benefits for students who were not spending 25 hours per week in classroom study. This issue affected veterans in all Wisconsin VTAE districts.

Typically, associate degree students spent 16 to 18 hours per week in classroom and laboratory study. Scheduling was set up on a collegiate basis where 12 instructional credits were considered to be a full load. The VA wanted Wisconsin Technical schools to initiate supervised study to operate much like high school study halls. Without this mandated supervised study, veterans would lose about \$50 per month in promised benefits.

To Schneeberg, the VA ruling was unfair. "By contrast, veterans attending colleges and universities did not need supervision. The 25-hour requirement treated veterans attending VTAE schools like high school students." He hoped to see the issue go all the way to the Supreme Court in order to validate technical schools as equal to conventional colleges.

Collective pressure from all of the districts convinced the VA to change their ruling in 1972. Any veteran enrolled for twelve or more Associate degree credits would receive full benefits.

## **Phase I**

**B**uilding planning continued with "Phase I," an automotive, industrial, and mechanical complex of 43,500 square feet for classes such as machine tools, welding, mechanical drafting, diesel and heavy equipment, auto body mechanics, and auto mechanics. Also included were laboratories for materials- and metals-testing.

According to District Director Jaeger, "the purpose of the new building [was] to consolidate courses which were previously offered in separate buildings scattered throughout the city," including the Johnson Hill-owned building on 4<sup>th</sup> and Jackson, the former Grand Rapids Town Hall on Township Avenue, and the vocational addition to Lincoln High School.

Phase I building was approaching completion when general contractor Gritz Builders fell four to five weeks behind schedule, blaming the delay in part on "labor difficulties." Members of Ma-

sons Local No. 23 and Carpenters Local No. 820 quit work on Feb. 14, 1972, in protest over the lack of a new contract.

The Board sought legal opinions to see if the delay was illegal. Their contract with Gritz stated, "the district may assess penalties against the contractor for running beyond the contract deadline except in the case of a legal strike." Lloyd Mitchell, Board member representing labor, said that, in order for the strike to be legal under federal law the "union members must first vote their intent to strike and must picket a construction site when a strike goes into effect."

The building program was completed successfully, under the guidance and monitoring of Mid-State's Charles "Chuck" Anhalt, who had replaced Schneeberg as Trade and Industry coordinator. The many hours spent on shop and laboratory layouts were a natural assignment for Anhalt, said Schneeberg, because Anhalt supervised the programs that were to be included in Phase I.

A second task for Anhalt was planning for the actual move from three different Mid-State facilities to the new Industrial complex. The relocation would require the dismantling and packaging of every shop at the Wisconsin Rapids school.

While autumn 1972 classes were taking place, landscaping and exterior finishing were still in process. Created when top soil was removed to be used elsewhere on the campus, two spring-fed ponds would be staying. According to Jaeger's wife, Lorraine, "Dane Dahl contacted my husband. He thought that having the pond was an ideal place for young people to sit and dream."

Along with the campus came full accreditation from the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. MSTI now qualified for federal building grants to help with the next two building phases.

### **College Parallel**

**T**he Mid-State District was the only major community in the area that did not have a college parallel program. Many committee members believed that, if one were created, MSTI would receive more respect in the way potential students viewed their school and program.

To study the need for what proved to be a controversial concept - a college credit parallel program - in December 1972, the District 14 Board and Director Jaeger established a citizens' advisory committee. It was comprised of eleven members from Wisconsin Rapids and Port Edwards, two members each from Stevens Point and Marshfield and one member each from Adams and Milladore. Rapids opponent Silverman claimed the board had been stacked with people already in favor of the college credit track.

The committee began working on a proposal due in spring 1973, enabling MSTI to offer liberal arts courses by the next fall. If approval were granted by the local VTAE Board and the State Board, MSTI would be the second VTAE school in Wisconsin to offer a dual-track program after Nicolet College and Technical Institute in Rhinelander.

More skeptical members of the Citizens' Advisory Committee felt their responsibility was to determine if there was a need for the program. Some were still waiting for the results of a survey of high school students and their parents. Others, such as chairman Milton Schneider of Wisconsin Rapids, felt the need had already been shown and the committee should make specific proposals for setting it up.

Concerns came from Richard Dignan, who would later vote against the proposal, worried that it would lead to a junior college program "at the expense of the vocational-technical program." Chancellor Dreyfus feared that, if a college parallel program were set up in Wisconsin Rapids, then he would see enrollments fall even more at the University in a time of adversity.

Schneider, Wenzel, Meyer, and committee member Kathleen Warnecke assured Dignan that a junior college was not the intent. Schneider said the college parallel program would allow the choice of liberal arts or vocational-technical courses at the same institution and Mid-State would not need any extra facilities beyond those already planned. They explained to Dreyfus that the cost for the program at MSTI would likely increase to equal that at liberal arts institutions, decreasing the competition between the two campuses.



At the end of March, the committee brought their findings to the District 14 VTAE Board. The college parallel program was approved by a vote of 4-3 when, for the first time since the board was created in 1967, Board Chairman Wenzel had to step in to break a tie vote. The proposal was sent to the state VTAE board for approval.

### **1972 Lawsuit**

The State VTAE Board ordered a merger of Districts 14 and 15 in July 1972 to the detriment of Wisconsin Rapids. Robert Braun, Wood County Board member, had vowed a month earlier that dropping the corresponding lawsuit opposing the merger would amount to “recognizing defeat” and, although the suit might lose, “we should fight anyway.”

In early December of that year, David Silverman returned home after the Wednesday evening meeting of the Mid-State District 14 Board, of which he was a member, and suffered a fatal heart attack. He was 39. His widow was the former Lucie Land of Rudolph.

The Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* said Silverman was best known in South Wood County for his role in setting up a vocational and technical district and that he opposed the makeup of the current Mid-State District and continued to seek merger with District 15 at Wausau.

In January 1973, Judge Richard Bardwell “found no authority in state statutes giving the state VTAE Board the right to merge districts without approval of those districts.”

Two weeks later, State Sen. William Bablitch, D-Stevens Point, announced that a bill had been introduced in the Wisconsin Legislature that would allow the Wisconsin VTAE Board to merge districts as Wausau and Stevens Point interests called for. He said that “too often parochial, hometown bias selfishly protects its own interests, but it is obvious that these sorts of political games should not be played with our educational system. The VTAE board should be free to operate as they think best suits the people of the state.” He said the two districts never were meant to be divided and that the VTAE board should be given the power it was always intended to have.

Rapids resident and State Rep. Schneider added amendments to protect Wisconsin Rapids from the merger. The first, to require the Legislature to give permission for a merger, was defeated by the Assembly 49-46. Another assemblyman Anthony Earl, of Wausau, who held Dave Obey's former State seat, said he did not think the court ruling took into account the feelings of the citizens of Portage County when they asked to be shifted into District 15.

Schneider's other amendments proposed "to delay merger until a district's debts have been paid, to delay the effective date of the law until 1977 and to require that both districts agree to such a merger."

On March 22, the Wisconsin Assembly endorsed the right of the State VTAE to merge districts. At the same time, it granted districts the right to veto the merger, giving Schneider and District 14 some sense of success.

After the bill was passed, State Rep. Herbert Grover (D-Shawano, later State Superintendent of Schools), said central Wisconsin officials were "really interested in saving [their] provincial hide, because [they've] got a mayor (Donald Penza) in Wisconsin Rapids who is interested in saving his provincial hide." He also thought that Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield were jealous of the four-year University in Stevens Point and the two-year center in Wausau.

Grover called Marshfield "such a dinky little town if it didn't have a clinic, you wouldn't have to stop there. I'm convinced they are parochial enough right now to say 'To hell with vocational education in Wood County. If we can't have it our way, we won't have it.'"

According to Grover, the adjustments of the 18 vocational districts in the state were supposed to be performed by the State Board as the legislature intended it to be.

In case the VTAE State Board allowed Portage County to detach itself from Mid-State, Wood County Board Chairman Andrew Hellner asked Jack Cole of the Wisconsin Rapids law firm of Cole, Conway and Brazeau to look into further legal action. If Portage County detached, it would cause the tax base in Dis-

trict 14 to fall below minimum requirements. The law firm also looked into taking the case to the U.S. Supreme Court if the state Supreme Court overturned the circuit court decision.

Governor Patrick Lucey threatened to “gut vocational-technical programs” if the Legislature permitted local VTAE district boards to have veto power over district mergers. “The state must have merger power to clear up ‘inefficient’ districts,” Lucey said, and inefficient districts should not have state dollars wasted on them. State Representatives John Shabaz and John Alberts accused Lucey of “executive blackmail.”

With Cole representing District 14, the Wisconsin Supreme Court upheld a lower court ruling that the State VTAE Board did not have the power to merge two districts without the consent of both districts involved. It was determined “that the order of June 20, 1972, directing the merger of Districts 14 and 15 is void.”

Schneider said, “These other people did all this work. My job was to simply just beat this bill. That’s one thing I really feel good about in my career: that there will be thousands of kids that go through there, and adults, and they’ll never know or hear about me, but it wouldn’t have been here if I hadn’t won that day.”

### **Why It Works That Way**

State Rep. Marlin Schneider (Dem. 72<sup>nd</sup> District) came to his first teaching job, in Eden, Wis., with a UW-La Crosse bachelor’s degree in education and social studies. He recalled that petitions sprang up the first day to have him fired for striving “to get kids to think about things.” He left for Wisconsin Rapids in 1966.

“It was the time when there was a teacher shortage. I interviewed with Ray Clausen, who was superintendent. He offered me the job and that’s how I came here. Then there were Milt and Gloria Schneider, not related to me, but friends. I taught with Gloria. They encouraged me to run for office.

“I remember a sign that had a profound effect on me. It said, ‘A man who knows how something works will always have a job. And the man who knows why it works that way will always be his boss.’ That was my first experience with the technical school. Back then they weren’t technical colleges. They were vocational

schools. It was sort of where people went who couldn't go to college."

Schneider, elected to the Assembly in 1970, recapped the situation in 1972. His friend, Milt Schneider, had been angry that Marshfield had been tabbed for the UW campus. With Meyer, Jaeger, and labor leaders like Haefner and Mitchell, he asked Schneider to help defend District 14. They thought Wausau was trying to merge Nicolet in Rhinelander and the Wisconsin Rapids school into the North Central District at Wausau. Other local labor leaders, like John Sullivan and Bernie Wirth, generally believed the University was "somebody else's, but technical colleges, vocational schools, as they called them then, that was theirs," said Schneider. "They always lobbied us on behalf of additional funding and program offerings.

"If Patrick Lucey, the Governor, had involved himself along with the majority leader, I would have lost. The reason he didn't, was because Al, who was head of the Central Labor Council here and worked at Preway, went down and sat in his office and told him, 'We went to work for you governor. We stood at those plant gates with you and now it's time for you to support us.'" A July 6, 1972, *Daily Tribune* photo shows Lucey in his office with Wenzel, Schneider, Haefner, and Rapids Mayor Penza.

At the same time, VTA [aka VTAE] District 14 received a promise from State VTA Director Eugene Lehrmann that the Wisconsin Rapids area would get a comprehensive VTA program with adequate facilities.

For its part, Rapids interests wanted to be sure Phase 2 and 3 would be completed as planned. They also wanted approval of a community college program for Rapids and a health occupation center for Marshfield. Philip Lerman, State VTA Board member, supported the community college. "We will be able to move ahead to give Wisconsin Rapids what it should have had 10 years ago – there's nothing to stand in the way of the board's ability to do this."

Schneeberg recalls that he was given the task of driving Al Haefner to Madison. "When we were escorted into Governor Lucey's office, Mr. Haefner grabbed a chair, pulled up to the

Governor's desk, and very directly told the Governor how the Wisconsin Rapids Central Labor Council helped him get elected, and now it was his turn to help Labor maintain their school in Rapids." Lucey said very little during the meeting, but stated that "he was glad that we came to inform him of our feelings."

### **Advanced Study**

**I**n January 1972, District 14 submitted an "Institutional Analysis Report for Correspondent Status" prepared by then-Assistant District Director Schneeberg. An on-site visit by NCA was conducted in May, and the institution received Candidate for Accreditation status in July.

In the development of districts, the need for accreditation led to a parallel desire for future leadership to have advanced academic degrees. Districts responded by developing sabbatical programs for advanced degrees. Schneeberg applied and Jaeger helped him obtain a doctoral study leave for the 1972-73 school year at UW-Madison. Schneeberg's academic interests would elevate the level of discourse on 32nd Street.

During the 1965-1970 period, forecasting potential enrollments became the basis for forming districts, locating schools, and for approving or rejecting building programs. Unfortunately, analytical models were not available and most forecasting was speculative at best. At the UW-Madison, Schneeberg did his part to remedy the situation.

He recalled that his professor, Merle Strong, "did a great deal of work attempting to define developing institutions, but was not able to quantify an actual forecasting model. With his help and through my research, I was able to develop a statistical model that *did* work. It enabled enrollment predictions to be made for a given location using U.S. Census Bureau data and other variables. It tended to remove political considerations from the forecasting process. This research that gave me my Ph.D. "

### **Phase II**

**T**he second cycle of the 32nd Street campus building program began in spring 1973. The next structure would be south of

the existing building and at least as large. It would hold classrooms and laboratory areas for business, secretarial, and home economics students. Designed by architect James Miller of John J. Flad & Associates, Phase II was to cost \$1.6 million and be completed by August 1 of 1974.

The plans were already approved by the State VTAE Board but some area residents were still worried. Discussion of a possible merger between Districts 14 and 15 just wouldn't stop.

Building plans continued until the next stumbling block: Assembly Bill 857, which put the already-started phase in jeopardy. The bill prohibited VTAE districts from incurring indebtedness in excess of \$250,000. This meant that Phase II would be greatly affected and Phase III doubtful. If the bill went into effect immediately, the district would have to issue promissory notes in order to go further with construction.

Phase II had been partially finished by December 15, 1974, enough to allow second semester classes to start on January 2, 1975. Classrooms and laboratories, in general, were completed and ready to use. That was not true for the main office. Ceiling tile had not yet been installed and lighting was furnished by hanging temporary light bulbs from the ceiling. The same was true for some faculty and staff offices. Heating was also a problem.

In spite of the minor difficulties, the staff was delighted to be in their new home. When classes resumed in January, the only complaint heard from enthusiastic students was that the color selection for carpets was dull.

In December 1974, a Biennial Visit was conducted by two NCA representatives. They cited many institutional strengths as well as several areas of concern and recommend that MSTI be continued in Candidate for Accreditation status and work toward another visitation during the 1976-77 school year.

When Mid-State Technical Institute students returned from Christmas break in 1975, they no longer walked into the old worn-down Witter building on Lincoln Street but into a newly-built campus on 32<sup>nd</sup> Street. Phase II had been finished by Dec. 15, 1974. Moving began the next day and continued until January 2, when classes resumed.



Earl Jaeger told wife Lorraine that former landowners Minnie and Sylvester Washkovick visited and told him they were awed by the buildings going up and by all the people attending “Mid-State Tech.” Sylvester was most impressed with the board room in the District Office with its long table and beautiful leather chairs.

The Witter building was taken over by Lincoln High School. Mid-State continued using the former Normal school for special projects; Schneeberg planned a developmental center to “help adults get the equivalent of 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading and writing skills.”

### **Phase III**

Shortly after Phase II was finished came the final \$1.4 million S phase, with Gritz Builders again the general contractor. Finished in January 1976, the final building included educational resources and student centers. A dedication/open house ceremony was held May 16, 1976, with Wenzel and former Secretary of the Army Robert Froehlke speaking about “Building for the Future.”

“There were times when we weren’t sure we’d see this day come,” said Wenzel. If there were a further economic downturn, Froehlke cautioned, reflecting the national malaise of the 1970s, the new facilities could sit empty, “if the future isn’t there to meet it.” He thought the technical schools were doing better than the universities in which many students found themselves duplicating classes already taken in high school. Another advantage of technical schools, was that students were put immediately into classes pertaining to their field of study, saving time and wasted classes.

Meyer, Chairman of the ceremony committee, closed by assuring the audience the building would be “well utilized.” The complex was desperately needed and he was proud of the moment taking place. He then invited the 1,200 people to tour the facility.

### **Taking Care of Business**

S tate law prevented a VTAE district itself from charging tuition, though it was applied to college-level courses at techni-

cal colleges in Milwaukee, Madison, and Rhinelander. In 1975, Governor Lucey tried to require tuition payments by students at the state's technical colleges amounting to 12.5 percent of cost or about \$225 per student annually. He also wanted tuition for adult programs at 70 percent of cost or about \$40 per student. If Lucey prevailed, state aid would be about 34 percent less than the board had requested.

Most of the local Board opposed his proposal. They felt it would alter their mission to help those who, because of financial handicaps or longer commutes, would not normally pursue education.

This time around, Portage County, operating without Silverman, did not demand merger of the two districts, but asked that Portage County simply leave District 14, Wisconsin Rapids, and join District 15, Wausau. The State VTAE Board nixed the request as Jaeger explained. "There was nothing else the state board could do; there's a moratorium on changing district lines." No mergers were to take place until July 1, 1976, giving every district the chance to prove its effectiveness.

Jaeger and Schneeberg believed that, if merger sentiments grew again, Wisconsin Rapids would not be a large target. It was no longer the weakest district in the state, despite being one of the smallest. Schneeberg vowed, "We're going ahead as a district; we're not waiting for political meanderings."

In a coda to Phase III, it was discovered that the roof leaked in the library and cafeteria. MSTI planned on filing a suit against the firms involved: Johns-Manville, Gold Bond Building Products, and Flad & Associates but accepted a settlement and the roofs were repaired.

Rather than undertaking a comprehensive self-study in 1976-77, a second biennial visit was conducted and summarized positively. "Mid-State Technical Institute continues to develop as a comprehensive technical institute...The areas of Concern as stated in this report are, for the most part, to be expected in a relatively new and emerging institution." The statement referred to "some very difficult political issues concerning the initial organization of the district." The recommendation of the visiting

team that Candidate for Accreditation status be continued was approved by NCA's Commission on Institutions of Higher Education in July.

Preparations for the initial actual accreditation visit to be held in May 1979 began in October 1977 under then "Dr." Schneeberg, Associate District Director, chairing the Steering Committee and many staff members involved in committees. The self-study was written to respond to four evaluative criteria, as well as any "concerns," "recommendations," or "areas for improvement" cited in previous reports. The institution: 1. has clear and publicly stated purposes, consistent with its mission and appropriate to a post-secondary institution; 2. has effectively organized adequate human, financial, and physical resources in educational and other programs to accomplish its purposes; 3. is accomplishing its purposes; 4. and can continue to accomplish its purposes.

The straightforward criteria required considerable documentation and support in mounting a response which proved to be successful. At the completion of the on-site visit, the team recommended that the Mid-State District be granted accreditation at the associate degree granting level and that a comprehensive evaluation be scheduled in five years (1983-1984), the maximum number permitted by the Commission to institutions being awarded initial accreditation – and good news.

### **Mid-State Foundation**

Established in 1979, the MSTI/MSTC Foundation is a not-for-profit organization in service of, but separate from, the college. Funding priorities for the Foundation include student scholarships, student services, and special program support.

The first organizational meeting was held July 14, 1981, after the Citizens Committee for Vocational Education recommended the Mid-State VTAE District Board transfer \$959.14 (proceeds from a button sale) to the Mid-State VTAE District Foundation Inc. It would continue to receive tax-exempt personal and corporate gifts.

Originally composed of 15 directors and three ex-officio directors, the first board officers were Jaeger, president; Dr. Ar-

thur Hayward, vice president; Guy-Robert Detlefsen Jr., secretary; and Darwin Blanke, treasurer. Other members were Milton Schneider, Marvin Love, Alvin Haefner, Mel Schneeberg, Martin Schreiber, Lloyd Mitchell, Harriet Kniess, Gerard Veneman, William Thomas Jr., and Earl Nelson. *Ex-officio* members were Meyer and James Suski.

The development of the Foundation was facilitated by Attorney Detlefsen, who wrote articles of incorporation and processed legal documentation required by the State. He charged no legal fees and freely donated his time to the Foundation. The Foundation was another example of community leaders coming together to advance the college, the region, and MSTI/MSTC students.

A key milestone in the development of the Foundation was due to the generosity of the late Leonard & Lillian Bethke, who bequeathed \$1 million to the Foundation. The Bethkes had owned Bethke Chevrolet-Oldsmobile in Wisconsin Rapids for 32 years. When Mrs. Bethke passed away on September 25, 1995, she contributed more than 90 percent of her estate to non-profit groups, many located in South Wood County.

In her bequest to Mid-State Foundation, Mrs. Bethke asked that the funds be used for financially needy students attending the college. In honor of their generosity, the MSTC Foundation Board offers an annual, full-tuition scholarship to students entering the college's Automotive or Diesel & Heavy Equipment programs.

In July 2010, the Foundation Board of Directors honored new and "graduated" donors of its Donor Recognition Program established in December 2002. As of June 30, 2010 the Foundation Donor Recognition Wall represents 215 business, organizations, and individual donors for total contributions of \$2.7 million. Through the last 28 years, the Foundation has assisted over 3,000 students in achieving their academic goals through distribution of over \$1.8 million in scholarships.

### Fond Farewell

**O**n July 31, 1981, the first and only director of Mid-State Vocational, Technical and Adult Education (VTAE) District to

that time, retired, although he stayed on several weeks while his successor, Schneeberg, recovered from surgery.

Jaeger had completed 24 years in his VTAE career and had been District Director since 1967. He said the District had served over 19,000 students the previous year, 5,000 in 40 full-time programs and 9,000 in adult continuing education. That compared to 200 students in five full-time programs and 3,000 evening school students in 1967.

Jaeger predicted that, in a few years, most courses would be taught so students could proceed at their own pace; that there would be evaluation programs, so students could choose the best learning style for them; that more classes would be attended during the evening and weekends, using television and computers.

Business and industry would rely on Mid-State for more retraining of employees. A big upswing in productivity in the economy would lead to increased demand for VTAE education. He pointed to the four-phase construction during 1970-79 as a career highlight along with national accreditation from the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools in 1979.

"The old compulsory-age institutions, known mostly as a landing spot for dropouts, no longer exist," Jaeger said. "VTAE schools are now known for their quality of postsecondary education and career training." He was "fortunate to have been involved with an educational system that has the ability to cope with the changing educational needs and times."

Charter District Board member and Chairman since 1968 Frederick J. Wenzel said Jaeger's able and dedicated work during the "stormy" years of the early 1970s allowed for "our successful emergence from that period."

"Days or nights, Saturdays or Sundays have never made much difference to Earl. The school always came first." A later tribute from Wenzel said Jaeger was known for his quiet guidance and "was the hardest working person I have ever known; one who had complete dedication to the students and their welfare."

In his retirement, Jaeger continued civic service as president of the village of Biron 1981-89.

### **Reaccredited**

**P**reparation for reaccreditation began in the summer of 1982 with the appointment of Dr. Max Farning, Administrator of Research and Planning and Libby Rosandick, Administrator of Adult Continuing Education, as co-chairmen of the Steering Committee. A time schedule and a handbook were compiled, and solicitation of volunteers completed for nine subcommittees which were to review “strengths” and respond to the “concerns” cited by the evaluation team in the initial accreditation report of 1979.

In February 1984, a four person NCA evaluation team spent three days in the district. In response to NCA’s four evaluative criteria, the team concluded that the Mid-State District was effectively accomplishing its mission and could continue to do so. The team recommended continued accreditation and that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for the 1993-1994 school year. By April 15, 1989, a written report should be filed with the Commission addressing the status of progress in securing additional physical facilities at the Stevens Point and Marshfield campuses and changes in the state funding pattern as it related to a percent of state funding for the operational budget.

### **Marshfield**

**T**he city of Marshfield and VTAE District 14 reached an agreement in which the Willard D. Purdy School would be a sister school to Wisconsin Rapids. The rental fee was set at \$7,800 for the year beginning on July 1, 1969. When the agreement was passed by the Marshfield Common Council, only Alderman Ray Devine abstained. Later, it was announced that Devine had accepted a position as welding instructor with District 14 at the Wisconsin Rapids location.

At Purdy, eight classrooms were reserved for use by the Marshfield School District. Junior high classes previously held in the building were moved to the newly-remodeled senior high.

Wisconsin Rapids architect Donn Hougen’s preliminary figure of \$18,000 to remodel Purdy included re-using switches, welding booths, and equipment. The project had begun when the



District 14 Board found the actual cost closer to \$41,535. Hougen explained that, once the project began, “it was discovered that cooling sinks and tanks, wash fountains, and additional heating, ventilating, and plumbing were needed to meet state codes.” Hougen also faced a labor strike, bad weather, loss for six weeks of a piece of equipment being shipped from another state and a paint spray booth that had to be made usable because it did not conform to state codes.

Marshfield’s next turn to upgrade came when MSTI officials met with the Wood County Board to discuss a new campus on land owned jointly by Wood County and the city of Marshfield, partially occupied by the University of Wisconsin-Marshfield. The new campus would cost the District \$2.5 million. Wenzel said municipalities, particularly Marshfield, would have to provide the initial funding and then Mid-State would repay them over five years. Alternatively, the District could have a referendum on the issue but the outcome was likely to be “no.”

Wood County Board supervisor Michael Hittner worried that, in a couple of years, the facility would close and there would be two multi-million dollar buildings next to each other, one operating and one not. Officials argued that facilities so close together would create a great bond and a stronger entity.

State Rep. Schneider asked whether Mid-State could be classified like public schools for borrowing purposes but in September 1982 State Attorney General Bronson La Follette ruled Marshfield could not fund the program through that kind of bonding.

As supporters had come to expect, this did not stop the plans to build a new school.

One suggestion was to look into a District-funded, two-part phased building program similar to that used on the Wisconsin Rapids campus. The architect found the Purdy building “structurally good” but remodeling costly, considering the need for handicapped accessibility, repair of the roof and replacement of the heating and ventilation system. The gymnasium and a large auditorium would also need to be split into two floors to provide extra space. Not surprisingly, it would be

cheaper to build new than to remodel the old building.

Norbert Koopman, dean of the University of Wisconsin Center, Marshfield, said the new campus would benefit the University as the two could share facilities, programs, and parking. Schneeberg stated it would be “a step forward” in the relationship the board would like to develop with the University. Mid-State would save \$275,000 annually and the university would see “increased enrollment, which would increase its budget and better utilize existing facilities.”

If the plan were implemented, it would be the first such joining of university and technical school in the state. However, the project was postponed again.

The discussion resurfaced in 1987 and 1988. Anthony Kiedrowski, Wood County Board Chairman, believed a new building was an immediate need and cooperation with the University might have to wait. Schneeberg saw philosophical problems in university-technical college cooperation because the technical college prepared students for the workplace “right from the get-go,” whereas, the university center prepared students for upper-division classes which would then prepare the students for the workplace.

In late 1989, it was decided MSTC would be built just west of the UW campus on part of the UW Center Wood County-Marshfield property. The focus then turned to a \$4.5 million referendum. State Director Gene Lehrmann argued that if voters were not willing to invest in the young, the future of north central Wisconsin would fall below standards being set in other countries.

On March 2, 1990, the Marshfield *News-Herald* reported that, according to Schneeberg, the \$4.5 million referendum would only make a difference of “7 cents per \$1,000 of equalized valuation, or \$3.50 for the owner of a \$50,000 house. You’re talking about a Big Mac, fries, and a Diet Coke.”

The referendum passed. On August 21, 1991, Mid-State Technical College Marshfield opened its new facility at 2600 W. Fifth Street. Mayor David Koepke called the building a community effort and added that the “referendum passed with flying colors.”

Wenzel said, “It’s hard to put into words how you feel about a project you’ve wanted for 20 years.” Added Schneeberg, “While

everyone is excited that the building has finally been built, the real challenge is to give this building an educational soul.”

At a cost of \$2.5 million, the 41,500-square-foot one-story structure had room to grow, was handicapped accessible, and, compared to the old Purdy School, had more efficient use of space. Previously, students and staff had to park on the street or in a timed lot. Finally, adequate parking was available.

The dedication was held on October 6, 1991. The key speaker was Dwight York, State Director of the Wisconsin Technical College System with master of ceremonies Mid-State Board Vice Chairman, Frederick Wenzel. Other notable participants were U.S. Rep. David Obey, State Sen. David Helbach, State Rep. Donald Hasenhorl and Marshfield Mayor David Koepke.

York congratulated an audience of about 150 and Mid-State District officials for working so hard to get the building referendum passed. The group “got to this day the old-fashioned way; [they] earned it.”

### **Stevens Point Campus**

**A**fter July 1, 1970, the Stevens Point Technical School, 933 Michigan Ave., officially became part of District 14.

VTAE District 14 rented the Stevens Point campus from the city of Stevens Point for \$26,325 per year and provided that the District be given the first chance to buy if the property were ever sold. In turn, the City of Stevens Point gave the equipment inside the school to the District.

The second lease began in January 1982 for a 20-year period (extended in 1987 until 2012).

A new building was considered in the 1980s but the Board decided then that the existing building would be adequate unless enrollment increased significantly. The 1,300 students in 1986 were slightly fewer than two years previous, probably because some programs were eliminated.

In 1986, Mid-State hired Michael Haefner as architect to renovate the 25-year-old Stevens Point campus. Even though the building was still owned by the City of Stevens Point, the cost would be incurred by the MSTI District and raised through taxes

and federal grants. Renovations would include an addition, a new roof, remodeled classrooms and offices, a study area, modernized windows, and modernized heating and ventilation system.

A parking lot lay to the east of the building and the city Recreation Center was to the south. To accommodate Mid-State expansion, one possibility was to move the Recreation Center into the Emerson School building once Emerson students were moved into the Jefferson School as reported by the March 29, 1990, *Stevens Point Journal*.

In early 1991, the City said it would tear down part of the Recreation Center. Mid-State would pay the estimated \$88,000 for interior work needed to rebuild the lost space on the other side of the building. Total expenses for the project would total \$135,000 plus the cost for demolishing the north wing.

Once the agreement was final between Stevens Point and the District, the project moved quickly. The general contractor was Denny G. [Gruetzmacher] Builders and the cost was to be slightly higher than \$515,000 but definitely under the budgeted amount of \$550,000.

Plans were to build 8,500 square feet from the middle of the south side of the existing building and remodel 1,500 square feet of existing space. The new addition would hold a laboratory and classroom facilities for the lithographic stripper program, along with general rooms and new office space.

### **Adams County Center**

Many prospective students in Adams County, it was believed, could not afford to drive to Wisconsin Rapids. In 1976, Mid-State officials decided outreach to the lower portion of their District would increase overall enrollments and leased a 1,500-square-foot building from Mr. and Mrs. Michael Danowski of Adams for \$250 a month to house basic adult education and goal-oriented adult learning, along with other adult classes.

In 1982, after the rental agreement had ended, Mid-State bought three lots and several buildings at the Adams County Center for \$69,200. The board also approved \$45,000 to purchase adjacent office buildings that fit in with long-range plans.

It was soon apparent that more space was needed to “further district development and allow the Adams County Center to offer more courses.” Three classrooms were added to the existing building at a cost of \$180,411.

The District paid for the construction with a \$150,000 loan. In January 1986, the board listed Adams as a priority to finish for the 1985-86 school year.

### **MSTC**

On August 19, 1987, Mid-State Technical Institute officially became Mid-State Technical College after approval by the Wisconsin Vocational, Technical and Adult Education Board. The name change to “college” affected all 16 technical institutes in Wisconsin except for those in Madison and Milwaukee which were already known as colleges. Schneeberg commented that the new title would represent to the public “the kind of effort that takes place in this institution.”

### **State of Flux**

Mid-State continually made sure to offer programs and courses in fields that would see future employment increases. For instance, in 1987, a simulated high-tech factory enabled students to gain “hands-on experience in the high-tech manufacturing world.” MSTC also attracted students by implementing programs in high demand. In 1989, an associate degree nursing program at Wisconsin Rapids supplemented Marshfield’s many health-related offerings.

In 1991, Schneeberg, along with Anthony Kiedrowski, and other educators from around the U.S. and Canada, traveled to Europe to “gain insight into an educational system that is in a tremendous state of flux.” Schneeberg predicted that emerging world economies of the Eastern Bloc would someday affect America. Two relevant courses were Economics and Government. Also discussed was a study abroad option. Schneeberg thought there might be a connection with UWSP to facilitate a combination program.

Schneeberg: “The institution slowly emerged with associate degree programs. We had to go through all the steps the state made us take. Some of them were legitimate. Some of them were barriers. The nursing program which was so badly needed was such a struggle bringing into the community. The data processing program which became the byword for almost every occupation became a struggle to bring into this institution.

“The state said what we’re going to do is develop schools of specialization. Some will have a common core of programs but then they will specialize. NTC in Wausau gets the nursing program. For central Wisconsin, there has been a tremendous competition between Mid-State and NTC.”

Mid-State has worked to create strong bonds with area businesses. Beginning in 1969, the board sought approval to begin a class to train students to join the 5,000 workers employed in the paper industry. Chuck Korn, Consolidated Papers Inc. Employee Development Manager, said that, “those seeking employment at CPI, and hoping to work at machine, welding, or instrumentation jobs, better have a vocational college degree.” Consolidated often recruited recent graduates, sent journeymen to school in order to keep their skills up-to-date and helped develop programs for apprenticeship courses.

Mid-State calculated job placement rates for recent graduates in the upper 80<sup>th</sup> percentile. In the 1990’s, businesses kept coming back to employ more students because they knew the students were knowledgeable in the areas they had studied.

### **More Accreditation**

To prepare for the next accreditation procedure, in 1992, Wisconsin Rapids Campus Dean Libby Rosandick and Connie Haack-Hurlbut, a General Education instructor from the Stevens Point campus, were named Steering Committee co-chairmen by MSTC president Schneeberg. Volunteers were solicited for 12 subcommittees and subcommittee co-chairmen were named.

Members of each subcommittee gathered information, analyzed data, reviewed “strengths” and responded to “concerns” as



expressed in the most recent accreditation visit. The exhaustive 18-month effort involved 140 MSTC staff members, and resulting in a 211 page document.

The list of 12 subcommittees illustrates the comprehensive nature of the self-study:

- Assessment
- Continuing Education, Outreach and Economic Development
- Educational Curriculum, Programs and Instruction
- Educational Support Services
- Enrollment Services and Marketing
- External Relations-Tech Prep, Articulation and Other Secondary/Post-Secondary Initiatives
- Financial Resources
- Futuristic Perspectives
- Governance and Administration
- Human Resources
- Physical Resources
- Student Services and Activities

In addition, an 85-page book of “Basic Institutional Data Forms” was compiled and submitted by Dr. Max Farning.

Once again, the onsite visit resulted in a favorable recommendation. The next onsite reevaluation visit wouldn’t be required until the maximum ten years.

Since the comprehensive evaluation of 1994, NCA changed its methodology. Institutions were given a choice of following the traditional self-study methodology or adopting a quality improvement model, Academic Quality Improvement Process (AQIP), which involved an annual update and check-up visits with a seven-year accreditation window. MSTC chose the AQIP model and, in 2001, became one of the first Wisconsin technical colleges to participate.

### **Miscellaneous**

**G**oal Oriented Adult Learning (GOAL) was a non-tuition program in the 1980s at all three campuses and the Adams County Center for students whose academic background might

not otherwise permit successful completion of programs offered by MSTC or other educational institutions. GOAL offered assistance with mathematics, social science, reading, science, career education, civics, English, and English as a Second Language. Many utilized the free materials and instruction of the program as they prepared for the GED/HSED high school equivalency test. Almost all the students in the GOAL program continued on to take technical diploma, or associate degree program courses.

Reflecting changes in the society, Adult Education courses were designed for adults who were either seeking a degree or looking for personal development. Classes ranged from computers to cooking. Co-author Engel taught Creative Writing in the 1980s. Adult education courses also moved into locations without campuses such as Port Edwards, Plainfield, Arpin, Auburndale, and Pittsville.

In 1993, Mid-State began a distance learning system in which classes were telecast from one classroom to another in a different town using fiber optics technology with two-way, full-motion video and audio transmission. The program included classes for 178 college students and high school students from the four sites that offered the program. Tom Liska, Adams Center Supervisor, became MSTC's first distance learning coordinator.

MSTC has held many events and has begun many programs directed towards youth. An annual two-day career camp, "Totally Tech," allowed students entering grades 7-9 to explore career options in an informal college setting. Workshops over the two days offered hands-on activities and encouraged dialogue about the value of a technical college education. Another program began when Governor Tommy Thompson signed the Youth Options Program into law in June 1998, providing opportunities for high school juniors and seniors in good academic standing to take post-secondary courses at a technical college that counted for college credit and toward high school graduation.

By 1998, the Computer Information Systems Program had shown the greatest increase. This prompted the directors to award \$3.1 million for building, remodeling, and new computer software and hardware for a new academic and administrative infor-

mation program. Then-president Brian Oehler commented that “the rapid pace of technological development has made knowledge a competitive advantage.”

As Mid-State moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the new average age for students was 33 years old, an increase directly related to the growing need for technology education. Among students were women with children and full-time workers with little discretionary time and high expectations who needed flexible class schedules and courses close to home.

Schneeberg retired as MSTC president in 1995 after serving since 1981. During his tenure, MSTC experienced the highest student enrollment growth rate, at 23.9 percent, of any Wisconsin technical college and had added 13 programs to the college.

In a letter to the board members, he spoke of his dedication to MSTC over the 28 years and contacts that he made with some of the finest people in the world. Relating to the “growth decades,” he challenged the future staff and community to work to make a “good college even better.”

### **Front Door to the Future**

The “front door” project now in place began in September 1999, to be completed in May 2000. The new entrance would be inviting and logical. It would consolidate in one area the most used services: admissions, registrar, financial-aid offices, and bookstore. According to John Clark, then director of facilities, and John Lay, director of campus operations, the new construction would “allow more ‘student-friendly’ delivery of services.”

Students and guests would be able to enter at an obvious point on campus, whereas administrators had been directing new students to “Come to the flagpoles.” A tunnel-like building was also built to connect the administration with the library. Other tunnel-like buildings were added until few buildings were left unconnected. One opening was left intentionally between two buildings so emergency vehicles could reach the courtyard in the middle of the campus.





Mid-State Technical Institute above at its original location on Lincoln Street, Wisconsin Rapids, and above right at 500 32nd Street North. Below, Stevens Point campus, 933 Michigan Avenue. Opposite lower: Purdy School, 110 W. Third St., Marshfield.



*MSTC*



*Flad Architects*



*MSTC*

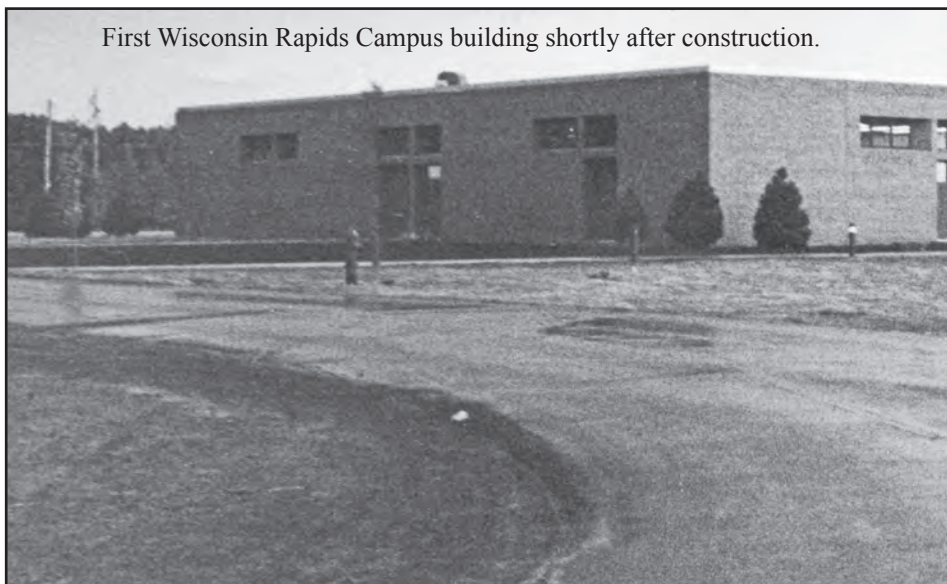




**Mid-State Vocational, Technical and Adult Education (VTAE) District Board - 1973**

Left to right: Robert Kirsenlohr, member-at-large; James Wypych, employee member; Lloyd A. Mitchell, employee member, secretary; Richard J. Dignan, school superintendent member; Daniel P. Meyer, employer member, vice-chairman; John Korda, employer member, treasurer; and Frederick J. Wenzel, member-at-large, chairman

First Wisconsin Rapids Campus building shortly after construction.





Mid-State Advisory Committee, 1966. Among those pictured: Bill Van Ornum (back left), Chuck Anhalt. Right, Donald Engel, father of the author and, as a city councilman, a proponent of the Wisconsin Rapids-based district.



## **Brand New**

Designed by Flad & Associates of Madison, the Mid-State Technical Institute created from farmland on 32<sup>nd</sup> and Washington Streets at Wisconsin Rapids' eastern boundary was clearly a college campus of the modern style. The assemblage of modern, mostly one-story offices and classrooms surrounded an interior courtyard and featured pleasing geometric lines and proportions. Man-made ponds provided a restful and aesthetically pleasing ambience.

It was a contrast to the aging, multi-level, urban Vocational School that mingled with other old educational facilities and residences in the heart of the city — each in its time a state-of-art and functional educational facility worth its share of civic pride.



*Library*





*Photos from Flad Architects, Madison, Wis.*





*From MSTC Catalog*



The MSTI Wisconsin Rapids Campus is located at the intersection of 32nd and Washington Streets), twelve blocks east of H

# MID-STATE TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

**MSCi** Marshfield  
Stevens Point  
Wisconsin Rapids

Providing Career Education for Central Wisconsin

## AGRICULTURE

Farm Operation

Farm Training

## BUSINESS EDUCATION

Account Clerk

Accounting

Administrative Assistant

Secretarial

Clerk Typist

Data Processing

Marketing

Medical Transcription

Personal

Stenography

Supermarket Management

## HEALTH OCCUPATIONS

Health Unit Coordinator

Medical Assistant

Nursing Assistant

(Pre-Service)

Operating Room Assistant

Practical Nursing

Respiratory Therapist

## HOME ECONOMICS

Child Care Services

Cosmetology

Dietetic Technician

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Auto Body

Automotive Mechanics

Computer Electronics

Technician

Diezel and Heavy Equipment

Mechanics

Electrical Power Engineering

Technician

Electronics Technician

Highway Technician

Instrumentation Technology

Machine Tool Operation

Mechanical Design Technician

Small Engines - Chassis

Mechanic

Welding

Wood Technics

## OTHER OFFERINGS

Adult Education Courses

Apprenticeship

Cosmetology Specialist

Corrections Science

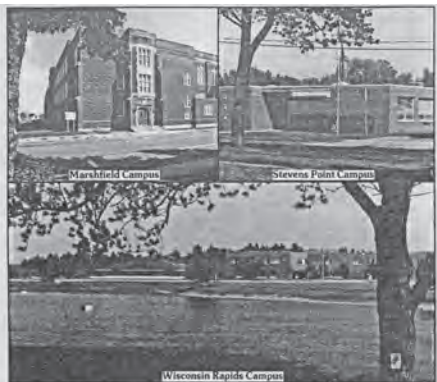
Goal-Oriented Adult Learning

(GOAL)

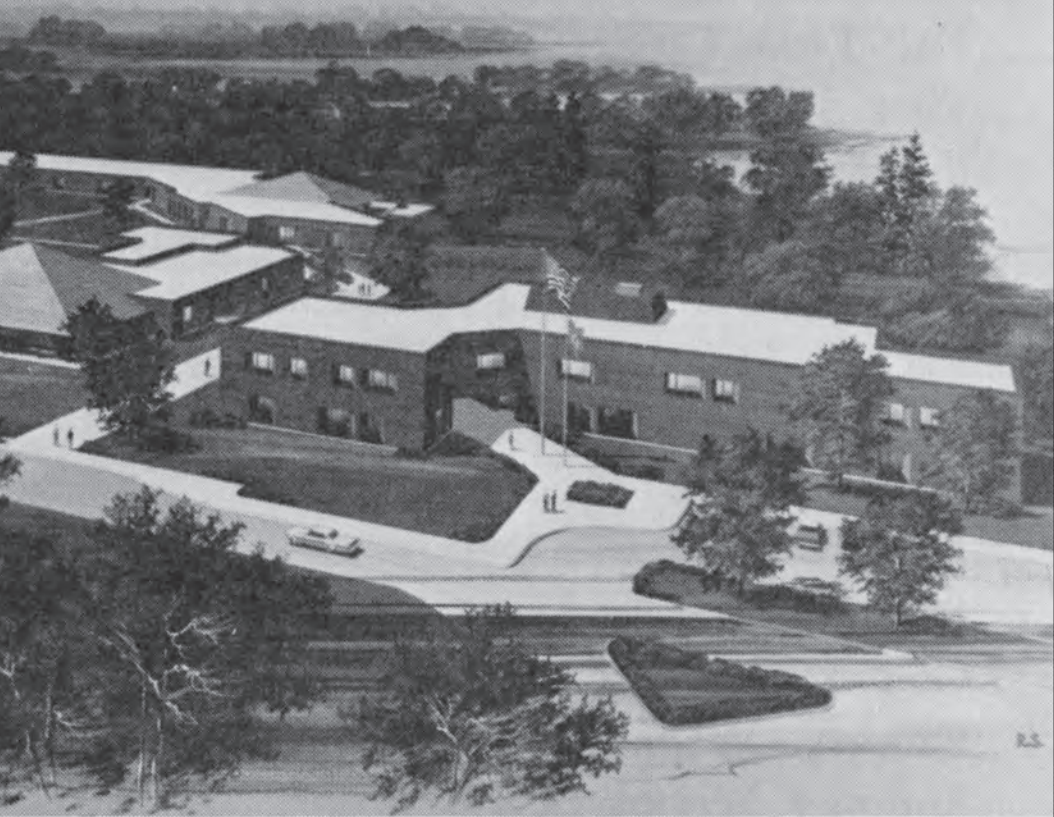
Police Science

Pre-Employment Training

Supervisors Management



Postsecondary vocational-technical education is available through Mid-State Technical Institute's Campuses in Marshfield, Stevens Point and Wisconsin Rapids. All three campuses provide modern job-related experiences, materials and equipment. For more information call the Student Services Office at (715) 423-5650.



s located at 500 - 32nd Street N. (corner  
blocks east of Highway 54 on Washing-  
highway 13 on Saratoga Street.





*MSTC*

Marshfield Campus



*MSTC*

Adams County Center



Stevens Point Campus

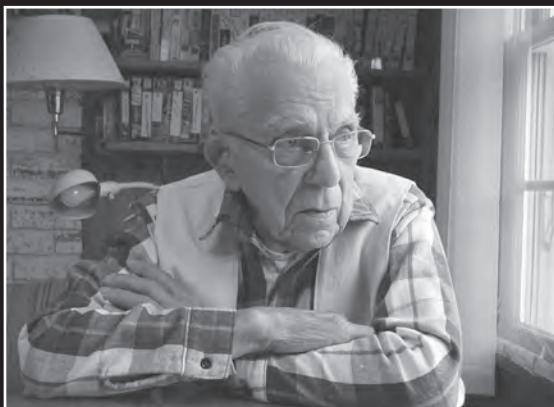


Student Megan Greenway at library, Wisconsin Rapids Campus (2010)



Mel Schneeberg

*Pioneers*



Randy Facklam



Lorraine Jaeger



Rep. Marlin Schneider



*From  
Interviews  
by Dave  
Engel*



Dan Meyer



Libby Rosandick



Larry Nash



Bill Goetz



*Uncle Dave Photo*

Dr. John Clark, MSTC President 2002-2010

*No one exemplifies the combination of mental vision and manual skill better than current MSTC president Dr. John Clark, interviewed in his office April 29, 2010 by Dave Engel and Holly Knoll.*

Clark joined MSTC in 1977 as an automotive technician instructor and became head of the department 1982. He was appointed Trade and Industry Division Chairman in 1993 following the retirement of Charles Anhalt. After serving as Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs, he was appointed president in 2002, replacing Brian Oehler, president since 1995.

## John Clark

In his words, edited, and condensed

### **Mirror of the Community**

I was 26 years old when my wife, Sandra, and I came to the Wisconsin Rapids campus, August 16, 1977, to interview – downstairs in this very building. It lasted perhaps half an hour and they offered me a job teaching in the automotive area. “I’m really pleased with that,” I said. “My wife is in the vehicle in the parking lot, and I’m going to talk with her just a minute.”

So I walked right out across the lawn here and she was sitting in the car with the windows rolled down. “They just announced it on the radio,” she said. “Elvis Presley had died.”

“That’s too bad. But I have some better news to share.”

That was 33 years ago and this college has provided a great career for me and a good life for my family.

### **Manual Training**

I was raised in the small town of Wheeler, Wis., north of Menomonie, Wis., and worked for a couple of summers on local farms: haying, cultivating and plowing. During the winter months, I worked at a portable saw mill. That was hard work but it was rewarding work. I also worked for my cousin on his mink farm for 90 cents an hour.

A job came open in a local gas station that had one stall for repairs: tires, batteries, belts, hoses, clutches, universal joints, things of that nature. I liked to work with mechanical equipment, appliances, bicycles, automobiles. I went over and hung out at the garage and made my interest known until they hired me.

During college, I worked through some of the winter seasons and breaks during the academic semesters trimming and harvesting Christmas trees. When we moved to Wisconsin Rapids, in addition to teaching, I worked summers on construction projects including installing drywall in the west side of the mall.



I come from a family of carpenters. My father and uncles worked in construction doing roofing, masonry, framing and finishing work, mostly in the residential area. Weekends and many evenings were spent working on some of the projects they were involved with.

I looked at my dad and my uncles and they were worn from the tough physical work. They had sore backs, sore arms, sore hands, gnarly injured fingers. I thought, "There's gotta be something more challenging. There's gotta be something more inspiring. There's gotta be something that's physically easier to do."

On one of the farms, I worked for a man named Larry Madsen, a really talented guy. He could have inherited and taken over this large farm if he wanted. It was over 1,000 acres of property with 250-300 head of milk cows. They milked three times a day.

He was a coach for me in a way. He had nice clothes, nice equipment, nice cars, always seemed to be organized and the right match to take over. I couldn't imagine that he would want anything more than what he had; but he wanted to work his way off the farm. He wanted to get into education.

Another influence was a fellow pursuing a teaching credential at what was then called Stout State University. My wife Sandra's older sister was going with him. His name was John Donica and he had been a mechanic in Detroit, Mich. He was encouraged by a teacher that he had in high school to go on to college because he was academically qualified.

John said to me one day in conversation, "You're a mechanic; you seem to have the wherewithal to do what I'm doing. You might want to consider going to Stout and learn how to teach."

Stout was well recognized as a training institute for industrial arts and vocational education. My wife was going to Stout at the time. She earned a degree in psychology and sociology and had a background in a broad field of history. I began attending Stout in 1972.

### **An Automotive Position**

**D**uring the 70's, there was a substantial growth in technical colleges statewide. Many of the students at the University of

Wisconsin-Stout at the time were preparing to get into technology education as faculty at colleges and high schools. It was a period of rapid growth in technology and technical education. Occupations were getting more sophisticated because of the changes in equipment, methodology, licensure, certification, safety. Expectation of consumers and the public were converging to elevate the skill and the preparedness of the workforce in many ways.

My major was Industrial Arts with a focus on Vocational Education. Industrial Arts was a broad field experience in construction, welding, machining, graphics, electronics and it would have allowed me to teach in any Wisconsin high school. The emphasis on Vocational Education was provided with my automotive background and allowed me to qualify for work in the Wisconsin Technical College System. It was important, as I looked at it, to have this flexibility to go either way because I didn't know where the jobs would be.

Bill Van Ornum was the administrator in charge of academic programs at Mid-State. His responsibility was to fill the need for faculty in this organization as it was growing in a variety of areas. I can remember getting several calls from Bill because he had a pressing need for university credentialed faculty. Many faculty came in to the profession with occupational experience. Bill would call and say, "John, I have an opening in our diesel program would you be interested?"

My response was, "No, I'm not interested in the diesel area because it's big stuff, smelly stuff." I did however indicate an interest in teaching in the automotive program if there was an opening. I had a good feeling that I might be qualified for not only this college but also Chippewa Valley Technical College at the time, District 1. They were expanding their automotive department.

Through the spring and then into the summer, I didn't hear from him. I applied to the graduate program at UW-Stout and was fully registered to begin in September when the job here became available.

### **Mid-State 1977**

**T**he first person I ran into at this college was Wilbert Knobeck, “Bud.” That summer, he was elevated from automotive faculty to a department head. Randy Facklam was head of student services. Bill Van Ornum was head of academics. Chuck Anhalt the trade and industry division chairman. Earl Jaeger and Mel Schneeberg were in the upper administration.

Most of the buildings were in the position they are now: Industrial Building, Technical Building, Library, and this Administrative Building. The Educational Building was not here. These connective structures were not in place. The grounds were not as open and landscaped and planted and visible as they are today. Many of the smaller buildings, parking lots, areas for driver training, fire training, the storage areas, were not here. The I/T Building or Industrial Transportation Building did not have the addition. The extensions and connections of this building were not in place.

The T Building was separate at the time. We created a conference center there; connected and expanded the auditorium; created an Employee Development Center, and gathering and display areas. This work has been done over the last ten years. We’ve literally connected all the buildings. This building connectivity is welcome during the winter months.

### **Referendum 1990**

**T**his campus was built, as some of the other colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System were, on a phased approach. The reason for building in phases was difficulty in getting public support for large building expenditures. They operated within the limits they had. At the time, there was a limit of \$500,000. Today, that is a million and a half without going to a referendum. It was really a good idea at time and it has continued to work for much of the construction that has occurred in the district.

To promote awareness and support for the early 1990 building referendum, we went through the phone book and selected 15 or 20 businesses each. We'd call up the business owner and say, "Hey, this is John Clark (or whoever was making the call) at Mid-State, and we have this building and expansion plan in mind." We're going to elevate the technology, instructional equipment, and laboratory space in our program and that will benefit you as an automotive dealer, employer, or owner of machine shop or welding supply or whatever the business was. Those calls went out for a period of time three or four weeks before the actual vote was taken. On April 3, 1990, district voters approved a \$4.5 million referendum with over 80 percent support. It was really quite remarkable. It was like, wow, if we knew we had all this support, we'd of ask for more. Those funds allowed the district to make significant improvements at all campus locations. It was a balanced approach. Everybody got attention and reward.

We had many challenging during the early years, getting alignment, commonality, and a uniform approach and common systems throughout the district. We wanted to celebrate the uniqueness of our regional locations and communities, and come together on common ground, not as a collection of communities, but as a single district.

### **Front Door 1999**

**O**ur buildings at all locations are safe, functional, attractive, and well utilized. Because of the multiple buildings located on the Wisconsin Rapids campus and distance between them, we created an architecturally pleasing , front-entry appearance here. The campus buildings blends so naturally with the landscape, if you're looking from 32nd Street. But students would come in and say, "Where do we go?"

Our support services, such as our bookstore, cafeteria, financial aid and counseling, were well hidden. As much as we thought we were being helpful, we were confusing students and making it difficult for them. We thought; let's make it a friendly

place. Let's make it easy to access. Let's be very visible. Let's try to get our services collectively positioned so that we can meet 80 percent of the incoming inquiries.

That's what you see downstairs as you come in, with the main office, bookstore, Foundation, financial aid, counseling just down the hall and everything very neatly organized. In the system of sixteen colleges, we were probably second or third making this move to a "one-stop-shop."

I am pleased to say that every square foot of facility in this district, some 360,000 square feet of space, has been attended to in the last ten years. That is, with lighting, painting, carpeting, furniture. It's a constant process of maintenance and upgrading. It's not extravagant. It's not elaborate. It's got to be clean and comfortable and appropriately matched to today's student expectations.

### **Big Thinking, Big Changes**

**W**e need to continue to prepare for the future. Although there are still jobs in the papermaking, manufacturing and construction, they're not as prominent and available as they were at one time. The question I ask often is "what is the next best thing?" "What are the new frontiers for occupational growth?"

We look at a variety of occupations, anticipating what the future may be and still keep an eye on the past. Automotive, diesel, machine tool, welding; all are still strong, necessary programs that offer great placement opportunities. Agriculture, agribusiness, business, service and health, corrections, police, fire, EMT; all these programs and occupations mirror what's happening and in demand today in society.

Communications, oral and written – economics, psychology, sociology, mathematics and science, global events, man, environment, biosphere; these are essential and contemporary topics that need to be the back drop for a prepared workforce and civil society.

What we offer for programs, service, and training is a direct

reflection on what the needs are in the region. We don't have programs and services on the menu that do not sell. No different than a grocery store or restaurant, we take them off.

Our programs are represented by advisory committees comprised of employers and employees. We must prepare individuals with knowledge and skills that are valued in the marketplace. If not, I hear from employers immediately, and I hear from the students and their parents, and other stakeholders, that we're on the mark or off the mark. We're constantly making adjustments to incorporate what the needs are, what the future holds in those fields.

At this college we have more than 50 different occupational choices. Adding apprenticeship training that is available would be another 20 occupations. Occupations are changing all the time. We're not teaching automotive technology as we taught it in 1977 when I was in the classroom. Automobiles, domestic and import, are very sophisticated and expensive. Onboard computers monitor everything from stopping to starting to traction control to interior comfort, engine emissions and safety features.

### **Sustainable Energy**

As the paper industry was changing and downsizing, we asked, "What is the next opportunity? What are the new frontier jobs? What does this 21st century hold for us?"

We saw, in the mix of things, the renewable, sustainable, and alternative energy. It was at the front of local conversation, Midwest conversation, and national conversation. We have over 250 students enrolled in those programs right now. We'll have our first graduates next month. These are the kinds of things that MSTC and the Wisconsin Technical College System are recognized for - speed and agility.

Our consumers are, for the most part, very astute and sophisticated. They vote with their pocket book and today the educational universe is at their finger tips, literally, if it isn't place bound as in the past. Through a combination of programs based



here, students can earn a certificate, a diploma, an associate degree or a license. They can earn a bachelor of science. They can earn a master's; and if they want to pursue a Ph.D., they can earn that from this location through online distance learning.

At this college, we touch the lives of over 9,000 students annually in central Wisconsin. In this state, if we wrap all of the sixteen technical colleges together, we serve over 450,000 students annually, compared to 180,000 students enrolled at the University of Wisconsin system.

### **Staff**

**I**n the business for over 30 years, I've seen lots of folks come and go. I've seen lots of organizations transition from good to bad, bad to good, and all points in between. At this college, I couldn't be blessed with a more talented team of leaders. They're experts in their field: finance, human relations and student affairs as well as academic affairs. They've demonstrated much success year in and out.

All of our faculty are credentialed in the discipline they teach. They must come into our college and be recognized, not only by our college labor contracts, but also the Wisconsin Technical College System Board. They need occupational experience in the field they represent, and they need a corresponding educational credential closely aligned to that. For example, in electrical engineering, they need recent appropriate experience in that field plus an engineering degree. If they teach in health care, the same thing is required. It's a tough system to qualify for. Our credentialing requirements are as difficult as any in higher education.

### **Board**

**I** have the privilege of working with a board of directors comprised of individuals who are leaders in the community, the state, and some that serve on national boards and committees. Robert Beaver, who is an experienced school administrator from Adams-Friendship, has served on this board for 19 years. He currently has leadership responsibilities with the Wisconsin Techni-

cal College System Board's Association. He is, also along with me, working with the System Board to create the budget for the next biennium, which is 2011-2013.

Patrick Costello, another long-serving member of the Board is Executive Vice President of the Wisconsin Technical College System Boards Association and has held numerous committee leadership positions with the Board's Association.

Dr. Alice Randlett is a faculty member at University of Wisconsin Stevens Point. She is on the national policy committee for the Association of Community College Trustees, representing the 1,200 two-year colleges that exist in this country.

Other members of the college's board include business leaders, educational leaders, an elected official, all representing a mix of employer and employee perspectives with expert experience and knowledge of the occupations they represent.

We have this cadre of experts coming together at this table and advising us on what it is that we need to do to be successful as an organization.

## I/T

When I came to this college in 1977, the word computer was not in our vocabulary. It was not in the conversation here. Now it's the common thread across all of technology. It's a given. If you walk up and down the hallways here, there isn't a program or an individual that isn't exposed to some computer-based skills and utilization that's applicable to their program.

In 1977, we had one telephone in each office complex. For me and the industrial building office of 22 faculty, our secretary, Kathleen Kubisiak, would get the call at her desk, pick up the phone, cover the mouthpiece and call, "John are you here?" because cubes were open. I would run from the other end of the office to the desk. She handed you the phone. You stood there, had a conversation and put it down.

On this campus, we had one copy machine with keyed number access located in the main office located downstairs. It was really difficult to do business in comparison to today's standard.

Now every office and all the locations have a telephone. The

majority of classrooms are smart classrooms with projectors and screens, and computers. Our custodians need computer access in order to monitor the building temperatures and the various systems that are operational.

We're eleven years into an IT [Information Technology] consortium with Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College out of Shell Lake, Wis., and Lakeshore Technical College out of the Cleveland, Wis., area, not only around instructional technology, but also data processing for running and administering three colleges. These three smaller colleges partner to provide online registration, complete payroll and human resource monitoring, and a 24/7/365 help desk for our students, with online support. There is no other consortium that has that long-term experience in this country.

Those are developments that create efficiency, redundancy and backup. If a lightning bolt hits the Shell Lake campus of Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, we can do their work. We can get their grades out. We can get their payroll out and the same for us. I've presented on this at several national workshops and people say, "Wow, that's amazing."

## **Students**

**W**e're sitting here looking at the parking lot at many of our students as they come and go, knowing they have a lot going on in their lives. They have family. They have work responsibility. They have tremendous complexity in their lives, and we better make it worth their time in our classrooms and laboratories to learn, to achieve, and gain what it is they are hoping and intending to gain. That keeps us in favor with our public. It keeps our taxpayers in support of our institution. It brings recognition by the system and state board. Our students represent the reason and purpose for our existence today, as it was in the past and will be for our future.

**Timeline**

- 1902 Jere D. Witter bequeaths \$50,000 for a Grand Rapids (Wisconsin Rapids) school.  
Evening “vocational” classes held in Marshfield’s Washington School.
- 1903 (Grand Rapids) Lincoln school built for \$55,000 (on fairgrounds to become Witter Field). Besides high school, Lincoln also houses County Training School for Teachers.
- 1907 A.F. Billmeyer constructs Grand Rapids Manual Training building for \$50,800 “to bear the name of J.D. Witter.”  
Wood County Normal built (Teachers College, adjacent to Witter building).
- 1911 Wisconsin Legislature creates system of Public Industrial, Commercial and Evening Schools.**  
Stevens Point city vocational program begins in Second-floor quarters downtown.
- 1913 Wood County School of Agriculture and Domestic Science housed on top floor of County Training School, Grand Rapids.
- 1914 County School of Agriculture and Domestic Science joins Normal School under same board; Normal building also houses County Superintendent of Schools, County Agent and County Nurse.
- 1916 State aid: \$3,700 to Rapids; \$2,800 to Marshfield; \$3,000 to Point; \$10,000 to Green Bay; \$20,000 to Milwaukee.
- 1920 New Marshfield vocational and junior high building dedicated to Sgt. Willard D. Purdy, WWI hero.
- 1921 Compulsory attendance law requires youths 16-18 to attend school full-time, half-time, or one day a week, depending on classification and employment.
- 1922 Vocational enrollment: WR (pop. 7,243) 454; Milwaukee 20,103; Edgerton 56; Stevens Point 475; Marshfield 360.
- 1924 WR city council levies \$6,675 for vocational education.
- 1926 Addition to Purdy building, Marshfield.
- 1927 Vocational Board (C.A. Normington, Crouse, Dan McKercher, John Schwenk, Julius Winden) writes former WR educator and State Director George Hambrecht opposing suggested change in age of compulsory education from 18 years to 16 years.
- 1929 WR Director W.A. Sprise attends meeting at Point with representatives from Eau Claire, Rhinelander, Wausau, Point and Mosinee to consider itinerant papermaking instructor.

- 1930 Of \$13,000 Vocational budget, state aid is \$3,000, the remainder levied by city of Wisconsin Rapids (henceforth abbr. "WR").  
State director Hambrecht asks Sprise to submit a report on the Vocational School for State Annual publication.
- 1931 New Lincoln High School built (later WR Junior High).  
Vocational enrollment: Marshfield 643; Point 950; WR 1,380.
- 1932 Director Sprise reports 71 part-time pupils and 1,266 evening-school pupils in 29 classes (more than same size state cities).
- 1933 Sprise heads committee of Kiwanians sponsoring clinic for children crippled by infantile paralysis (polio).  
Almost-new electric mimeograph machine purchased from Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. for \$150.  
Sprise tells Public Service Commission about Wood County lake projects (Wazeecha and Kaunewinne).
- 1934 Board of Vocational Education and WR Board of Education agree that Vocational Director devote all efforts to administration not teaching high school classes.  
Vocational Board meetings to be held in, and all Board of Vocational Education records filed in, Director's office.  
Director authorized to cooperate in sponsoring Home Show, providing there is no cost.
- 1935 Vocational School grants school credits and issues diplomas to youth, not enlisted in army, who have not completed education,  
Board reimburses accounts stolen from safe in Witter Building,
- 1936 WR School Superintendent Floyd Smith joins Vocational Board,
- 1937 Board members present: Crouse, Normington, Schwenk, Smith, and Sprise.  
Budget \$16,735. Salaries \$1,470, circuit instructors \$1,600, state coordinator \$150, rent \$2,500.
- 1938 Stevens Point Vocational programs moved to former Emerson (1929-1938) High School.
- 1939 Budget: \$20,650: \$6,650 paid by state and federal aids, \$14,000 by WR. Teachers salaries - \$9,350; Evening School salaries - \$3,000; rent - \$2,500; circuit teachers - \$1,600; University Extension - \$350; Homebound program - \$250.  
Teachers hired: R.W. James, carpentry; V. Bryan, sales training; Lt. Rex R. Andrews, police training; Z. De Rubeis, painting and decorating; John Natwick, pulp and paper; Norman Peron, plumbing; J. Just, firemanship; Mrs. Eastman, music; Dr. Howard McMurray,

public forum.

- 1940 Budget: \$21,500 (figures rounded), \$14,000 from WR.  
 “Who’s who in our vocational school” survey shows education, occupation, and interest of evening school students.  
 Master painters class paints rooms in Witter School.  
 Death of board member Schwenk; replaced by Edwin Johnson.  
 New ordinance provides \$4 per meeting to members of Board of Education and Board of Vocational Education.  
 Vocational schools established at Tomahawk and Rice Lake.
- 1941 State records show 45 vocational schools enrolling 125,000 students, 36,000 in day school and 39,000 in evening school - including vocational agriculture, rural vocational homemaking, rehabilitation division and defense training for essential defense industries.
- 1942 Teachers: Plenke, Eastman, Flanagan, Holliday, Freund, Paulson, Arpin, Roach, Wolske; Clerical - Rotermund; Rehabilitation - Renzel.
- 1943 Board: Johnson, Normington, Crouse, Smith, McKercher, and Sprise.  
 Teachers: Herman Cramer and George Huntington - Machine Shop; Harry Lee, Harold Bergman and Oral Washburn - Welding; Earl Sherman and Goden Wittet (?) - Assembly; Beryl Arpin, - “related”; Frank Govan - related, arts and craft (interior decorating).  
 Staff: Rotermund - general secretary; Lillian Elmer- Defense Training secretary.
- 1944 Teachers added: Mrs. George Mader, Raddatz.  
 Budget \$26,550, tax levy \$16,200.  
 Edwin Johnson to Bremerton, Wash., resigns as Board secretary.
- 1945 Day teachers, by subject, include foods, auto mechanics, printing, woodworking, machine shop, drafting, clothing, music, sheet metal, canning.  
 Budget \$30,000, tax levy \$18,000.  
 Director W.A. Sprise “best single friend of the City Vocational Basketball League.”
- 1946 Sunday afternoon Wood County Basketball league at Field House, part of Vocational Physical Education program for adults - ends.  
 Sprise attends a director’s conference at Stout Institute to discuss the G.I. bill.  
 Evening salaries by class topic: auto mechanics, bookkeeping, cake decorating, clothing, electronics, first aid, foods, home nursing,



knitting, ladies tailoring, machine shop, mathematics, painting, physical education, Sunday basketball, public forum, public speaking, radar, shorthand typing, visual aids, welding.

R. Facklam hired as a teacher for the following year.

WR joins program at Stout to prepare instructional material for all state Vocational and Adult schools.

Budget: \$48,000.

1947 Budget: \$46,000.

Sprise reports that he has been using his car for transportation for students, truancy, errands, as a truck, etc. and is awarded \$35 per month instead of .05 cents per mile.

Fur farming and commercial cranberry growing programs organized.

Letter of thanks from Carl Normington for flowers sent to the funeral of his father, C.A. Normington, Board member.

1948 Budget \$61,000, city levy \$32,800.

WR enrollment for evening school, 880; day school, 265, including vets on G.I. bill.

Request to install a vending machine in the Vocational School by Gerhard Van Beck - tabled.

Letters to doctors and heads of civic organizations relative to instituting a physio-therapy center in WR.

1949 Ralph Schroeder report of 54 Vocational Schools, based upon the city population, has WR 12th highest in evening enrollment in the state. In day enrollment, WR is third highest.

Board: Lloyd Felice, president, Clarence Showers, VP, and C.K. Crouse, secretary. Also. L.W. Murtfeldt, Sprise and Supt. Smith.

Enrollment for Evening School Adult Students 715; 55 full-time vocational school day students.

1950 Each Board member is allowed \$250 cost for railroad tickets to V&A convention; rooms, \$7 per night for 6 nights.

Mimeograph machine now 17 years old and in poor condition, replaced.

School receives war surplus machines: a surface grinder and production milling machine.

1951 Full-time Driver Education instructor employed for High School and Vocational students and adults.

1952 Curriculum: Auto mechanics, bookkeeping, cake decorating, clothing, current problems, electronics, foods (Supper Club), home

nursing, knitting, ladies tailoring and millinery, machine shop, mathematics, painting, physical educational, printing, psychology.

Howard Michalsen hired as instructor of Driver Education.

Budget: \$88,000, \$49,500 from city.

Director of Vocational School to be “principal” of the Witter building and grounds, parallel to the principal of LHS.

Director reports gas seepage through old gas pipes in old building; new copper tube installed.

Resignation of Jack Plenke to accept a State position, hiring of drafting teacher James Holy.

1955 William Goetz employed as a full-time Driver Instructor.

Budget \$96,000.

1957 Report: in 1919, adult enrollment was 200, compulsory day enrollment 1 to 3; Now (1951), 2,707 total, including 70 day compulsory students.

1959 WR budget \$140,000, \$102,000 from city.

1961 WR budget: \$132,600, \$67,000 from city.

**Legislature adds “T” word to “Schools of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education.”**

Eldon Everetts becomes Principal of School of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education.

Full-time one-year post-secondary education begins at WR with seven students in Accounting and 13 in Secretarial Science.

W.A. Sprise retires.

1962 WR budget: \$156, 500.

New school on Michigan Avenue, Stevens Point.

Electronic Servicing named first full-time program at Point; cooperative program with P.J. Jacobs High School provides shop facilities for High School students.

Board: Clarence Showers, Harold Akey, Ray Clausen, John Leuenberger and Victor Young

New vending machine in new student lounge to serve coffee, hot chocolate, and tea.

1964 First two-year program, marketing.

A “fine report” concerning the Adult Home Economics activities given by Mrs. Elizabeth Rosandick.

1965 Chapter 292, “for the purpose of establishing a state-wide system of vocational, technical and adult education districts,” by July 1, 1970.

Wood County Board of Supervisors submits formal resolution to form vocational-technical district in Central Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education and Coordinating Council of Higher Education approve a Vocational-Technical district in central Wisconsin.

Wood County Normal (Teachers College) discontinued and facilities sold to WR for Vocational School use.

Practical Nursing begins at Point, Civil-Highway Technology and Instrumentation Technology at WR.

- 1966 18 vocational districts established by the State Board.

Report from W.A. Sprise to Art Hayward lists business men who served on the Board of Vocational and Adult Education in Wisconsin Rapids: George W. Mead Sr., F.S. Gill Sr., Charles Hatch, John Schwenk, Edwin Johnson, C.K. Crouse, C.A. Normington, Dan McKercher, L.W. Murtfeldt, Lloyd J. Felice, C.M. Showers, Victor Young and Harold Akey. Ex-officio members (Supts. of School) were E.G. Doudna, Julius Winden, Floyd Smith and R.E. Clausen. Marlin Schneider hired as WR social studies teacher.

- 1967 **District 14 officially recognized.**

Melvin H. Schneeberg hired as WR teacher-coordinator of Trade and Industry Education.

Vocational Technical & Adult Education District 14 includes Marshfield and WR schools.

Earl F. Jaeger hired as first District 14 Director and begins to convert WR school into a comprehensive center.

- 1968 Board members are concerned with citizen opinion but no citizens attend budget meeting two years in a row.

Budget: \$867,000.

- 1969 WR School of Vocational and Adult Education becomes Mid-State Technical Institute.

First full-time diploma program (Medical Assistant) offered at Marshfield.

Fire at Marshfield Board of Education building destroys all but two offices.

District 14 board looks for new campus building site.

Budget: \$901,000.

- 1970 District 14 completes organization.

Educational program in Transportation Management receives national coverage.

Flag burned inside entrance at Marshfield Vocational School.

Sylvester and Minnie Washkovick agree to sell 155 acres for \$108,500 for MTI (aka MSTI) campus.

Budget: \$1,096,043.

1971 Phase I of WR building program begins.

\$3.9 million bond issue to finance new MTI building, adopted by District 14 Board, defeated 16,365-11,753 in district referendum.

UW-Platteville allows transfer of two-year associate degree credits in industrial education, industrial technology and light building construction.

VTAE District 14 issues first course catalog for WR, Marshfield and Stevens Point.

Budget: \$1,797,000.

1972 Phase I building complete.

District-wide Mid-State Technical Institute includes Marshfield, Stevens Point, and WR campuses.

David Silverman, Board member from Stevens Point, dies suddenly of apparent heart attack.

Reciprocal agreement reached on tuition fees for part-time evening courses with Districts 1, 2, 12 and 15.

Budget: \$2,106,000.

March 12: To John Sancanaro, Chairman, Wis. State VTAE Board:

Dear Sir: In order to preserve the educational opportunities for the people of central Wisconsin and a fair tax structure please leave district #14 as presently set up by the State. Sincerely Yours, Donald A. Engel (co-author Dave's dad).

1973 Phase II of building program begins.

Wausau-WR tech district merger ruled illegal by State Supreme Court (in favor of Rapids interests).

1974 Phase III of the building program begins.

1975 Phase II complete.

1976 Phase III complete.

\$4 million Mid-State complex dedicated.

1977 John Clark hired to teach auto mechanics.

1978 Wood County Normal demolished.

Budget: \$3,270,00.

1979 MTI receives full accreditation status from North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

- Witter building demolished.  
Budget: \$6,100,00.
- 1981 Fire at MTI destroys automobile and temporarily disrupts classes in auto department.  
Earl Jaeger retires. Melvin Schneeberg named Director.  
Budget: \$7,918,000.
- 1982 District 14 purchases Adams Center.  
Budget: \$8,709,000.
- 1984 Budget: \$9,900,000.
- 1986 Budget: \$11,887,000.
- 1987 **Name changed to Mid-State Technical College.**  
Budget: \$12,679,000.
- 1988 Budget: \$13,029,000.
- 1990 Voters approve \$4.5 million construction referendum. Stevens Point and WR expand; Marshfield gets a modern campus building at 2600 West Fifth Street.  
MSTC becomes smoke free.
- 1991 Budget: \$18,476,000.  
Gender equity study and workshop encourages women to explore wider career options.
- 1992 Tiny Tech preschool facility available for children of students, staff, and general public.  
Budget: \$18,252,000.
- 1993 Budget: \$19,472,000.
- 1995 Brian Oehler named MSTC president.
- 1996 Board of directors votes to move forward with \$425,000 Adams expansion.
- 1997 Budget: \$23,700,000.
- 1998 Budget: \$26,530,000.
- 1999 WR campus builds service-oriented “front door.”  
Budget: \$28,200,000.
- 2002 John Clark named MSTC president.
- 2003 Sylvester and Minnie Washkovick recognition held at MSTC.

## **Mid-State Technical College District Board Membership**

### **July 1, 1967**

Daniel Meyer, Chairperson  
Fritz Wenzel, Vice Chairperson  
Edward Schwerin, Treasurer  
Wesley Snyder, Secretary  
R. E. Clausen  
Joseph Weber  
Lloyd Mitchell

### **July 9, 1968**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson  
Wesley Snyder, Secretary  
Edward Schwerin, Treasurer  
Lloyd Mitchell  
R. E. Clausen  
Joseph Weber

### **July 9, 1969**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson  
Wesley Snyder, Treasurer  
Lloyd Mitchell, Secretary  
Michael Malone  
John Korda  
Joseph Weber

### **July 8, 1970**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson  
John Korda, Treasurer  
Lloyd Mitchell, Secretary  
Michael Malone  
David Silverman  
Joseph Weber  
Robert Roseberry

### **July 15, 1971**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson

John Korda, Treasurer  
Lloyd Mitchell, Secretary  
Richard Dignan  
Robert Kirslenlohr  
David Silverman

### **July 10, 1972**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson  
John Korda, Treasurer  
Lloyd Mitchell, Secretary  
David Silverman  
Richard Dignan  
Robert Kirslenlohr  
James Wypych (Appointed  
1-19-73 to replace Silverman)

### **July 9, 1973**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson  
John Korda, Treasurer  
Lloyd Mitchell, Secretary  
James Wypych  
Robert Kirslenlohr  
Richard Dignan

### **July 8, 1974**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson  
James Wypych, Treasurer  
Lloyd Mitchell, Secretary  
Robert Kirslenlohr  
William Currie  
Donald Erpenbach

### **July 14, 1975**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson  
Robert Kirslenlohr, Treasurer  
Lloyd Mitchell, Secretary



William Currie  
Leo Wergin  
Donald Erpenbach

**July 12, 1976**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson  
Robert Kirslenlohr, Treasurer  
Lloyd Mitchell, Secretary  
Leo Wergin  
William Currie  
Donald Erpenbach  
Lee Paul (Appointed 12-13-76  
to replace Erpenbach)

**July 11, 1977**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson  
Leo Wergin, Treasurer  
Lloyd Mitchell, Secretary  
Judith Cardo  
William Currie  
Lee Paul

**July 10, 1978**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson  
Marvella Peterson, Treasurer  
Leo Wergin, Secretary  
Catherine Hosig  
William Currie  
Lee Paul

**July 9, 1979**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson  
Marvella Peterson, Treasurer  
Leo Wergin, Secretary  
Catherine Hosig  
John Korda  
Roland Krueger

**July 14, 1980**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson

John Korda, Treasurer  
Leo Wergin, Secretary  
Catherine Hosig  
Roland Krueger  
Marvella Peterson

**July 13, 1981**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson  
Anthony Kiedrowski, Treasurer  
Marvella Peterson, Secretary  
Catherine Hosig  
Ronald Lorbecki  
Thomas Lenk  
Loretta Schoechert (Appointed  
5-10-82 to replace Peterson)

**July 12, 1982**

Daniel Meyer, Chairperson  
Thomas Lenk, Vice Chairperson  
Loretta Schoechert, Treasurer  
Anthony Kiedrowski, Secretary  
Catherine Hosig  
Ronald Lorbecki  
Fritz Wenzel

**July 11, 1983**

Daniel Meyer, Chairperson  
Fritz Wenzel, Vice Chairperson  
Gerald Munyon, Treasurer  
Patrick Costello, Secretary  
Catherine Hosig  
Ronald Lorbecki  
Russell Lundquist  
Jane Staples (Appointed  
in October)  
Judy Freiman (Appointed in  
October)

**July 9, 1984**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Judy Freiman, Vice Chairperson  
Gerald Munyon, Treasurer  
Jane Staples, Secretary

Patrick Costello  
 Catherine Hosig  
 Russell Lundquist  
 Ben Pezewski  
 Daniel Meyer

### **July 8, 1985**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
 Daniel Meyer, Vice Chairperson  
 Ben Pezewski, Treasurer  
 Jane Staples, Secretary  
 Catherine Hosig  
 Roland Krueger  
 Russell Lundquist  
 Fred Camacho  
 Dorothy Lichty

### **July 14, 1986**

Anthony Kiedrowski,  
 Chairperson  
 Fritz Wenzel, Vice Chairperson  
 Allen Tozier, Treasurer  
 Dorothy Lichty, Secretary  
 Catherine Hosig  
 Roland Krueger  
 Ben Pezewski  
 Cathy Rhutasel  
 Fred Camacho

### **July 13, 1987**

Anthony Kiedrowski,  
 Chairperson  
 Fritz Wenzel, Vice Chairperson  
 Allen Tozier, Treasurer  
 Dorothy Lichty, Secretary  
 Fred Camacho  
 Ben Pezewski  
 Roland Krueger  
 Elizabeth Romell  
 Cathy Rhutasel

### **July 11, 1988**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
 Anthony Kiedrowski,

Vice Chairperson  
 Dorothy Lichty, Treasurer  
 Cathy Rhutasel, Secretary  
 Fred Camacho  
 Roland Krueger  
 Ben Pezewski  
 Patricia Raymond  
 Elizabeth Romell

### **July 10, 1989**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
 Anthony Kiedrowski, Vice  
 Chairperson  
 Dorothy Lichty, Treasurer  
 Patricia Raymond, Secretary  
 Fred Camacho  
 Roland Krueger  
 Cathey LaHaye  
 Ben Pezewski  
 Elizabeth Romell

### **July 9, 1990**

Anthony Kiedrowski,  
 Chairperson  
 Fritz Wenzel, Vice Chairperson  
 Dorothy Lichty, Treasurer  
 Patricia Raymond, Secretary  
 Robert Beaver  
 Betty Bruski Mallek  
 Fred Camacho  
 Cathey LaHaye  
 Elizabeth Romell

### **July 8, 1991**

Anthony Kiedrowski,  
 Chairperson  
 Fritz Wenzel, Vice Chairperson  
 Dorothy Lichty, Treasurer  
 Patricia Raymond, Secretary  
 Robert Beaver  
 Betty Bruski Mallek  
 Cathey LaHaye  
 Elizabeth Romell  
 Michael Speich

**July 13, 1992**

Fritz Wenzel, Chairperson  
Anthony Kiedrowski, Vice  
Chairperson  
Dorothy Lichty, Treasurer  
Patricia Raymond, Secretary  
Robert Beaver  
Betty Bruski Mallek  
Elizabeth Romell  
Patrick Ryan  
Michael Speich

**July 12, 1993**

Anthony Kiedrowski,  
Chairperson  
Robert Beaver, Vice Chairperson  
Dorothy Lichty, Treasurer  
Patricia Raymond, Secretary  
Betty Bruski Mallek  
Patrick Costello  
Kitty Daniel  
Patrick Ryan  
Michael Speich

**July 11, 1994**

Anthony Kiedrowski,  
Chairperson  
Robert Beaver, Vice Chairperson  
Dorothy Lichty, Treasurer  
Patricia Raymond, Secretary  
Betty Bruski Mallek  
Patrick Costello  
Kitty Daniel  
Patrick Ryan  
Michael Tauschek

**July 10, 1995**

Robert Beaver, Chairperson  
Patricia Raymond, Vice  
Chairperson  
Betty Bruski Mallek, Treasurer  
Patrick Costello, Secretary  
Sandra Haasl  
Dr. Alice Randlett

Brenda Rhinehart  
Michael Tauschek  
John Wandrey

**July 8, 1996**

Robert Beaver, Chairperson  
Patrick Costello, Vice  
Chairperson  
Betty Bruski Mallek, Treasurer  
John Wandrey, Secretary  
Sandra Haasl  
Dr. Alice Randlett  
Brenda Rhinehart  
Ann Ruesch  
Michael Tauschek

**July 14, 1997**

Betty Bruski Mallek, Chairperson  
Patrick Costello, Vice  
Chairperson  
Sandra Haasl, Treasurer  
John Wandrey, Secretary  
Robert Beaver,  
Randall Dhein  
Dr. Alice Randlett  
Brenda Rhinehart  
Ann Ruesch

**July 13, 1998**

Betty Bruski Mallek, Chairperson  
Patrick Costello, Vice  
Chairperson  
Sandra Haasl, Treasurer  
John Wandrey, Secretary  
Robert Beaver  
Randall Dhein  
Dr. Alice Randlett  
Brenda Rhinehart  
Ann Ruesch

**July 12, 1999**

Patrick Costello, Chairperson  
Robert Beaver, Vice Chairperson  
Sandra Haasl, Treasurer

John Wandrey, Secretary  
 Betty Bruski Mallek  
 Randall Dhein  
 Dr. Alice Randlett  
 Ann Ruesch  
 Dean Ryerson (One-Year Term)

### **July 10, 2000**

Patrick Costello, Chairperson  
 Robert Beaver, Vice Chairperson  
 Sandra Haasl, Treasurer  
 John Wandrey, Secretary  
 Betty Bruski Mallek  
 Randall Dhein  
 Dr. Alice Randlett  
 Ann Ruesch  
 Dean Ryerson

### **July 9, 2001**

Sandra Haasl, Chairperson  
 Patrick Costello, Vice Chairperson  
 Robert Beaver, Treasurer  
 Dr. Alice Randlett, Secretary  
 Betty Bruski Mallek  
 Randall Dhein  
 Joseph Kinsella  
 Ann Ruesch  
 Dean Ryerson

### **July 8, 2002**

Sandra Haasl, Chairperson  
 Patrick Costello, Vice  
     Chairperson  
 Robert Beaver, Treasurer  
 Dr. Alice Randlett, Secretary  
 Betty Bruski Mallek  
 Randall Dhein  
 Joseph Kinsella  
 Ann Ruesch  
 Dean Ryerson

### **July 14, 2003**

Dr. Alice Randlett, Chairperson  
 Randall Dhein, Vice Chairperson

Dean Ryerson, Treasurer  
 Ann Ruesch, Secretary  
 Robert Beaver  
 Betty Bruski Mallek  
 Patrick Costello  
 Sandra Haasl  
 Joseph Kinsella

### **July 12, 2004**

Dr. Alice Randlett, Chairperson  
 Randall Dhein, Vice Chairperson  
 Dean Ryerson, Treasurer  
 Ann Ruesch, Secretary  
 Robert Beaver  
 Betty Bruski Mallek  
 Patrick Costello  
 Terry Frankland  
 Joseph Kinsella

### **July 11, 2005**

Randall Dhein, Chairperson  
 Joseph Kinsella, Vice  
     Chairperson  
 Betty Bruski Mallek, Secretary  
 Patrick Costello, Treasurer  
 Robert Beaver  
 Terry Frankland  
 Peggy Ose  
 Dr. Alice Randlett  
 Dean Ryerson

### **July 10, 2006**

Randall Dhein, Chairperson  
 Joseph Kinsella, Vice  
     Chairperson  
 Betty Bruski Mallek – Secretary  
 Patrick Costello, Treasurer  
 Robert Beaver  
 Peggy Ose  
 Dr. Alice Randlett  
 Dean Ryerson  
 Judy Woltmann

**July 9, 2007**

Joseph Kinsella, Chairperson  
Dean Ryerson, Vice Chairperson  
Betty Bruski Mallek, Secretary  
Patrick Costello, Treasurer  
Robert Beaver  
Randall Dhein  
Peggy Ose  
Dr. Alice Randlett  
Judy Woltmann

**July 14, 2008**

Joseph Kinsella, Chairperson  
Peggy Ose, Vice Chairperson  
Betty Bruski Mallek, Secretary  
Patrick Costello, Treasurer  
Robert Beaver  
Randall Dhein  
Anthony Marinack  
Dr. Alice Randlett  
Judy Woltmann

**July 13, 2009**

Peggy Ose, Chairperson  
Robert Beaver, Vice Chairperson  
Betty Bruski Mallek, Secretary  
Patrick Costello, Treasurer  
Randall Dhein  
Joseph Kinsella  
Lynneia Miller  
Dr. Alice Randlett  
Terry Reynolds

**July 12, 2010**

Peggy Ose, Chairperson  
Robert Beaver, Vice Chairperson  
Betty Bruski Mallek, Secretary  
Patrick Costello, Treasurer  
Randall Dhein  
Joseph Kinsella  
Lynneia Miller  
Dr. Alice Randlett  
Terry Reynolds

## Information Highway

*Building for the Future: Mid-State Technical College 1907-2010*, provides a general account, without footnotes or a bibliography.

Anyone wanting to retrace the information highway to the same sites may begin with the archives under development at MSTC's 32nd Street, Wisconsin Rapids, campus. For the early years, see minutes of the Vocational School Board 1918-1968, contained in several leather-bound volumes.

The later building and development of MSTI/MSTC can be traced through a travelogue of clippings, photographs, catalogs, and ephemera. Many of the older photographs used here were rescued by former staff members Bill Goetz and Libby Rosandick from the Vocational School building, prior to its destruction. At MSTC are interviews conducted specifically for this book: with John Clark, Randolph Facklam, Goetz, Lorraine Jaeger, Daniel P. Meyer, Lawrence Nash, Rosandick (who had considered writing her own book), Mel Schneeberg (who contributed additional material), Rep. Marlin Schneider, and Donald Sprise.

A second repository of more generalized historical interest is the South Wood County Historical Museum (SWCHC), 540 Third Street South, Wisconsin Rapids, in the care of Administrator Lori Brost, and at which co-author Dave Engel is Director and Holly Knoll, Curator-in-Training. The Museum houses photographs, maps, documents, interviews, and high school yearbooks, including the 1924 *Ahdawagam* referred to here and the clipping file originally assembled by T.B. Scott and McMillan Memorial public libraries. The SWCHC Museum is the former home of the Witter family, instrumental in creation of the Vocational School. It was also the home of T.B. Scott Public Library, 1948-70.

A couple blocks to the east, can be found Scott library successor, McMillan Memorial Library, where the exemplary Local History department offers computers, microfilm, maps, and texts of special interest to genealogists and historians. The Library also maintains a superior website and access to the News-



paper Archives website. Consulted here were paper and online versions of newspapers, including *Centralia Enterprise and Tribune*, *Wood County Leader*, *Grand Rapids Tribune*, *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*, and the website, *Ancestry.com*.

The Museum and Library each house the following references: *1923 History of Wood County*, Tom Taylor's 1930s Wisconsin Rapids history, documentary movies by Paul Gross, books by Marshall Buehler, *1956 Centennial Edition of the Daily Tribune*. Also at both sites are the articles, books and photographs of *River City Memoirs*. Wisconsin Historical Society archives at Stevens Point and Madison are repositories of international reputation.

Documents of special interest:

Edmund P. Arpin's recollections, in *River City Memoirs*.

Edward A. Fitzpatrick and Jennie McMullin Turner, *An Inventory Description of Wisconsin's Continuation Schools*. Biennial Report of the State Board of Vocational Education Part I, Madison, Wis., 1920. (Google books)

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Kathleen A. Paris, *A Political History of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education in Wisconsin*. Madison: Wisconsin Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education, 1985.

Melvin Henry Schneeberg, "An Analysis of Distance and Per Capita Income As Factors Affecting Enrollments in the Wisconsin Vocational, Technical, and Adult Education System," 1975.

Wilbert A. Sprise, "A Brief History of Vocational and Adult Education in Wisconsin and Progress of the Vocational and Adult School in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin." Unpublished, provided to the Wood County Board of Supervisors.

Of those now at MSTC, a tip of the beret goes to Sherri Guck for editorial assistance, President John Clark for leadership, and Director of Communications Elizabeth Moran for visions of Oz. Without the vivacious "Auntie Em," Uncle Dave wouldn't have set foot in Kansas.



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## Uncle Dave & Holly

(Uncle) **Dave Engel**, Wisconsin Rapids native and City Historian, is Director of the South Wood County Historical Corp., editor of *Artifacts* historical magazine, 30-year columnist for the Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune*, chief factotum of Mid-State Poetry Towers and publisher of *Hepcat's Revenge*. His books include *River City Memoirs 1-6*, *Calumet: Copper Country Metropolis*, *League of Wisconsin Municipalities: A Centennial History*, *Jack the Hugger*, *Just Like Bob Zimmerman's Blues: Dylan in Minnesota*, *Three-Fingered Gypsy* and *Ghost of Myself*.

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