

Vocational and Technical Studies

CHAPTER XX

Prior to becoming a public institution in the spring of 1939, Boise Junior College had had no courses in vocational or technical education unless one includes a few courses in business.

On March 24, 1939, the people of the proposed junior college district held an election to determine whether a public junior college district should be established. They voted by a nine to one ratio to establish such a district.

Within three days, Chairman Haga of the Boise Junior College Inc. Board, followed an earlier decision of February 11 by the Board to have a committee of at least nine men appointed to study the vocational needs for the new public junior college curricula. As a result, Chairman Haga appointed the following committee to represent the vocational needs of the Boise community in the new public college:

Eugene B. Chaffee	Education—President Boise Junior College
Joseph W. Crowe	Electrical
Herschel R. Davidson	Agriculture
Samuel Diamond	Merchandising
J. L. Driscoll	Banking
W. W. Gartin	National Youth Administration
John I. Hillman	State Educational Association

J. Cecil Jordan	Building Construction and Architecture
William Kerr	State Director of Vocational Education
Guy B. Mains	Forestry
Roy H. Shoemaker	General Construction and Engineering
W. D. Vincent	Education—Superintendent Boise Schools
Walter R. York	Printing and Aviation ¹

It was interesting to note that at the meeting of this group, all but one of the 13 civic leaders stated that they were in professions or vocations other than those they planned to enter when students.

There was much enthusiasm on the part of the business men who met on this day to suggest needed vocational courses. The new public college was to become a real stimulant to economic Boise.

The committee favored the addition of vocational courses in forestry and secretarial studies. Mr. Guy B. Mains, Regional Director for the United States Forestry Service in the Boise area, indicated the great need for young men trained as vocational foresters. He stated that the Forestry Service was planning to make the period of employment at least eight months out of each year. For a country just emerging from the worldwide depression, work of even eight months duration seemed highly valuable. Nearly all of the group expressed the need for capable secretarial help. As a result of their recommendations, the College faculty and Board of Trustees decided to add these two curricula to the current offerings of Boise Junior College which were general in scope.

The curriculum in vocational forestry was headed by Robert E. Latimore and the one in secretarial studies by Clisby T. Edlefsen, with C. Barton McMath, Jr., acting as the chairman of the total Business Department. These additional curricula were added the first year of the public junior college, 1939-40.

Also approved by the Board of Trustees at this time was radio and woodworking, both of which were developed under the National Youth Administration. Radio consisted of two years of vocational instruction; the first year in elementary

radio and the second in advanced radio. Mr. William O. Bradford instructed the radio courses and his was the first curriculum to take place on the new campus—the old Boise city airport. Equipment was set up in the eastern-most airplane hangar where the east half was divided off into smaller areas with fiber board walls making up the divisions and all in all, resulting in a fine vocational building for that particular stage of vocational education in Idaho.

The woodworking classes, taught by Mr. Vernon Beckwith, actually started out as a project to build furniture for the new Administration Building in August of 1940 when typing desks for some 30 students were needed for the stenographic classes. These were followed by other projects covering building needs for the fall classes in the new Administration Building.

With the threat of American participation in World War II, the National Youth Administration was gradually moving its educational program into defense projects. This was evident by the following record in the minutes of a Board of Trustees meeting of December 21, 1940; "President Chaffee reported that N.Y.A. had given its approval to a defense project which includes the construction of a concrete building 120' by 50' on the campus with 100 percent federal funds. The new building will be used as a machine and metal shop for training mechanics in connection with the defense program." It stood during the war as a concrete structure that could later be faced with the same type of Salt Lake brick that the other College buildings had.

The vocational courses were getting underway in the very month that war was declared in Europe, September 1939. One year later the Selective Service came into existence and a little over two years later in December of 1941, Pearl Harbor was bombed and America entered World War II. Mr. Beckwith entered the Sea-Bees and Clisby Edlefsen went into the navy. As a result, only the courses in forestry and radio continued and they likewise fell victims of the war and passed out of the picture in 1944. The demand for military personnel and man power in

every phase of our economy caused the curtailment or death of the vocational program until after the close of World War II.

The eastern half of the campus was returned to the status of an airport when the Civilian Pilot Training Program was ousted from the new bench airport in 1943 so that military flight training might occupy a much enlarged Gowen Field. At the close of World War II, returning veterans were given flight training at the College through the G.I. training, a part of which permitted such an aviation flight program.

Some business men felt that a small civilian airport could be maintained here and persisted in such a request until Bronco Stadium was constructed in 1950 across the eastern-most section. Only then was it realized by a die-hard faction of local residents that the College would need *all* of the old airport and that this was the area where technical instruction should be located along with physical education facilities.

During the war, Acting President Conan E. Mathews tried to get vocational educational projects started as indicated in the following quotation: "Acting President Conan E. Mathews introduced Messrs. William Kerr, Harry Ashford, and A. L. Littlebridge of the State Vocational Education Department and a discussion ensued regarding the establishment of classes in extensive vocational industrial training at the college. The acting president and the representatives of the State Department of Vocational Education were asked to submit a written report of their findings as to the feasibility of establishing such courses at the college, together with an estimated cost of the necessary building facilities."²

Due partially to the lack of buildings and space by the military flight training, it was not until the close of the war that the College actually returned to a vocational program. Mr. Beckwith returned on October 15, 1945 and immediately began to refurbish the old Scott Anderson hangar and rebuild the entire ceiling and side walls, repair the roof, and in general, improve the whole structure which was about ready to fall apart.

One problem was that the old buildings which had been shops in the early part of 1940 had been changed into hangars again in April of 1943. The Bradley Air Service was carrying on private flying instruction on the campus when the war ended and at that time, these buildings had to be vacated as rapidly as possible so that the vocational courses could be moved into them. When this was accomplished, two additional problems existed—(1) the financing of the necessary power tools on which to train the students and (2) the lack of an adequate source for teachers of vocational and technical courses. The individual instruction required in these courses made such education very costly due to the small number of students each teacher could efficiently teach. This idea was basic to courses sponsored by federal vocational funds and was a prime factor in receiving such support from vocational education sources.

Arrangements were made in September of 1947 to employ a college supervisor for vocational education—Mr. Robert S. Hunter. His salary was guaranteed through the State Vocational Education Department at 100% remuneration to the College. The financial support for each instructor started at 30% through State Vocational funds and was increased to 100% for instructors' salaries by 1953.

With financial support now available from the State Vocational Education Department, it was possible to begin body and fender classes under the direction of Vern Edwards. New machinery was purchased for the machine shop which had been started in 1944 with \$60,000 worth of equipment from both the National Youth Administration and the State Vocational Education Department to train students for war work. This became one of the best machine tool training courses in the West when John Hager became the instructor in 1954. His superior graduates had excellent positions offered them, principally in the San Francisco area. Mr. Hager retired in the summer of 1969.

By 1950 there was a real need in the Boise area for capable sheet metal workers and as a result of a study made by Robert

Hunter, Mr. Claude Waln was added to the staff in that year as the instructor of sheet metal. In spite of fine instruction and the necessary machines to train sheet metal workers, it proved difficult to get many students interested in this field and 1960 was the last year it was taught.

By 1958, Idaho and the Boise area in particular, needed draftsmen and a vocational course was set up in this field that fall and has continued to the present. At this same time, registered nurses were in short supply. Practical nurses became a partial solution to this problem and classes were added to help satisfy the demand for nurses in Idaho. The course covered a calendar year and consisted of 500 hours of classroom work and 12 hours of clinical experience. This course was followed a few years later by a dental assistant course which started in 1960 and some two years later was changed from a special status course to one offered within the vocational department.

In 1959, the Mountain Home Air Force Base indicated that many welding technicians were needed due to changes and expansion and that its contractors could not find enough well trained welding technicians. The College added a welding laboratory to its shops with the courses instructed by James Buchanan. Welding instruction has tapered off in the last few years as the demand for skilled workers in this field has lessened. It is, however, used as a base for many other trades and serves this function.

In the last few years, as more and more companies began to use computer programming and more advanced office machinery, it proved necessary to have more technicians who could keep machinery of this kind in good working order. Thus, in 1966, office machine repair and data processing were offered at the College.

The vocational department's most recent offering is a course in horticulture. The classroom study is supported by practical experience through working with the landscaping of Boise State College.

As interest in vocational-technical education grew over the years, the vocational-technical students wanted an organization on campus that was strictly for students of this division. In 1955 the first club of this nature began—Technical Trades with Lyle Trapp as its advisor. The following year, the club became the Gamma chapter of the national fraternity Tau Alpha Pi. Each year since then, the club's main project has been a Hobo March in Downtown Boise. Students dress themselves as hobos and solicit money from Boiseans. This money is then divided into as many \$50 scholarships as possible. A record of 14 scholarships were given to members of the vocational-technical division in 1966.

As indicated in other sections of this story, the need for vocational classrooms was satisfied through the following building programs:

In the summer of 1959 an addition to the existing machine shop was added for welding classes. This cost approximately \$32,000 and was finished in time for the fall term of 1959-60.

The next building was a two-story section constructed at the time the Library was built in 1962. Within three years, another addition was necessary and in the bond election of 1965, the Vocational Building was increased more than 100% in area and length, taking care of the College's vocational needs until the present. A fine new building is now being constructed and should be ready for occupancy by the fall term of 1970.

In the past 10 years, this department has changed greatly, outgrowing the original airplane hangars that the College acquired at the time the airport was changed into a campus. These have been superseded by a modern vocational plant which satisfies the present needs and anticipates early additions in vocational education.

¹Minutes, Board of Trustees Meeting, Boise Junior College Inc. March 27, 1939.

²Minutes, Board of Trustees Meeting, Boise Junior College District. September 18, 1944.