

"The Inception and Growth of the Junior College"
Address by Dr. J. C. Smith

June 24 1947

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July 10, 2001

Dear Jon.

Jane Lampe found this
speech of Armand Marks.
I guess at the dedication
of Wilkes College. It
is remarkable and I thought
should go with the Marks'
materials in the CMR.
Thanks Chris

THE INCEPTION AND GROWTH OF THE JUNIOR COLLEGE

by Arnaud C. Harts

revised by
June 24, 1947
for the
Salisbury

It all started in 1933.

Do you remember 1933? The despair of the unemployed? The frustration of millions of persons trapped in the breakdown of our complicated industrial machine?

They were tragic days, which I hope America will not have to experience again.

During those dark days, word was taken to President Homer Rainey, of Bucknell, that the youth of Wilkes-Barre and the Wyoming Valley were especially depressed in spirit.

Hundreds of capable boys and girls were graduating from high schools each year, anxious to go on with their education. But there was no college here and they were without the funds to enable them to go away to college, and without jobs, and without hope for their future careers. There was despair in the hearts and souls of the ambitious youth of this Valley.

It was suggested to President Rainey that Bucknell might send some of its teachers to Wilkes-Barre and offer freshman and sophomore college classes here for these ambitious but thwarted boys and girls. This suggestion was acted upon; an empty building was rented, educational equipment was installed, announcement was made, and a dozen Bucknell professors began to commute the 65 miles from Lewisburg. One hundred and ninety-three qualified young men and women were enrolled in the fall of 1933, the first year, and the Bucknell Junior College opened the bright doorways of hope to a generation of frustrated youth. The sum of oppor-

tunity began to shine a bit again.

I became president of Bucknell in 1935, and I soon discovered that I had a duty here in Wilkes-Barre as well as one in Lewisburg. At that moment, the Junior College was in rented quarters, was already in debt \$30,000, and operating at an annual deficit, and was becoming a burden to us at Lewisburg.

Our original temporary purpose had been achieved. We could well retire from Wilkes-Barre without criticism from the public. But, a deeper, more permanent need had been revealed; we had sensed the hunger of the youth of this great community for the advantages of a local college. Could we retire 65 miles out of range of the yearning eyes of those young people? Our consciences said, "stay". We stayed, resolved to help you establish a permanent college here, on your own local foundations.

✓ Wilkes-Barre needed a college, wanted a college, but could not meet the requirements of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for a college charter until it should be a "going concern" with a minimum of \$500,000 endowment. It looked like a long, long trail.

✓ At that period of crisis, we had the good fortune to learn of Dr. Eugene S. Farley, a young educator with the physique of a wrestler, the face of an angel, and the heart of a lion. We induced him to become the Director of the Junior College and to make the fight with us. He came with full knowledge of the difficulties, at a smaller salary than he was then receiving, against the warnings of his friends, (although his best friend, his wife, encouraged him), but with zest for the creative job and with courage to overcome all difficulties. It was a kind Providence that led us to him, and today I want to thank Eugene Farley publicly for

the noble manner in which he has led the Junior College to the victory celebrated today, and I am proud to acclaim him as the first president of Wilkes College.

He promised that Bucknell would promptly step out of the situation here, just as soon as the Junior College could acquire the strength to meet the requirements of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for its own charter, and that then the Junior College would assume its own name and its own management, and that Bucknell would then turn over all the accumulated assets to the local college without any further ownership, or control.

Do you know - there were some people here in Wilkes-Barre and elsewhere who just didn't believe me when I said that? "That's Bucknell's game? What do they get out of it?" some asked. It just didn't seem possible that a college would do that - sponsor a little Junior College when it was weak and poor, and then disown it when it was strong, and turn over to it voluntarily a million dollars worth of equipment and endowment.

This I promised, and today President Spencer will turn over all these assets to Wilkes College.

I am glad that I can be present here today at the fulfillment of this, my pledge of ten years ago.

While we at Bucknell were providing the sponsorship and the initial leadership for this college, you here in Wilkes-Barre and the Wyoming Valley sprang energetically to the assumption of your responsibilities for the Junior College.

First, a Junior College Board of Trustees was established, composed of several of your best citizens. A list of the present members of this Board is printed in today's program. These men and women took over

more and more responsibility and initiative, year by year, and for the past few years have been carrying the entire trusteeship of the Junior College. I wish that I might pay tribute to the particular service of each one of these trustees, past and present, but time does not permit. I am sure all of the members of the Board would want me to acknowledge publicly the service rendered by the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Gilbert S. McClintock, who caught the vision of the Junior College the first moment it was mentioned to him, and who has given his leadership unsparingly ever since. I thank him sincerely. Wyoming Valley youth owe him and the other trustees a great debt of gratitude.

Then, we intimated that the Junior College was prepared to receive gifts of buildings in the South River Street area, and gifts of money for equipment and endowment. There were some that thought I did more than "intimate". Our gentle intimation brought amazing responses.

First, Mrs. John N. Conynghan gave us her spacious residence. A week later, Admiral and Mrs. Harold Stark gave us beautiful Chase Hall. Mr. and Mrs. Beckesser then gave us a most useful residence on Northampton Street, which adjoined Mrs. Conynghan's property. And a little later Mr. Allan Kirby gave us his late father's commodious mansion bordering on Chase Hall. Soon after this, Mr. Julius Stern, whose home was situated in the next block, sent me a message begging me not to take possession of his home for the Junior College until he at least had an opportunity to talk it over with me.

✓ Within the last two years, four other buildings within the block have been given or acquired. And, year by year, a host of you gave money, generously and wholeheartedly, to equip the buildings and to build up the \$500,000 endowment required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

before a Charter for your own college could be issued.

Will you forgive me if I single out one check for special mention? It was given by a dear friend who is no longer with us, Mr. Daniel C. Roberts. [We were trying to raise that first fund of \$30,000 with which to equip Conyngham and Chase Halls, and how big that sum looked in those days! Mr. Roberts slipped a check for \$5,000 into my hand and said, "I don't believe you can build a college here, but if you must try, here's some help for you." It had a most helpful result at a moment of real crisis and proved to be only the first of many gifts by Mr. Roberts. Very substantial sums have come from many other friends, who want nothing said about their generosity. I hope I will be forgiven for saying that the youth of this Valley would not have a college today except for the generous gifts of Mrs. Dart, Mrs. Cliff, Andrew Sordani, Mr. and Mrs. Neckesser, Gilbert McClintock, Reuben Levy, S. H. and R. H. Kress, Allan Kirby, Julius Stern, George Guckelsberger, Miss Mary Koons and many others. Gratitude is due you all.]

And while the money was coming in, students were literally pouring into the classrooms of the Junior College in almost appalling numbers. Today there are 1,300 students enrolled, which was the maximum enrollment admitted by the mother institution, Bucknell, ten years ago. How the child has grown! And during all this growth, the faculty maintained the very highest quality of instruction.

So, I come to the end of this Bucknell story. From now on it will be the Wilkes story. May I express a hope and prayer.

First, to the Wilkes students of today and tomorrow. [Never take Wilkes College for granted. This opportunity has been placed here for you at a great cost of effort and devotion. This is no casual institution, put

here lightly. It was built out of human sacrifice; out of faith in you. Faith that you will use these facilities in service to your fellow men. I beg you not to enter these classrooms and laboratories in any selfish spirit. The men and women who have founded this college want you to grow, not simply that life may be easier and richer for you, personally, but they want you to grow in order that you may be better citizens of America and of the world; in order that you may be enabled to solve the great social and moral problems of your generation; in order that you may use your increased knowledge and power to bear the burdens of the weak, and to help bring a better and a finer world for all mankind.

To all friends of Wilkes College, may I ask that you keep this college a sacred place, a shrine dedicated forever to truth, to wisdom, to culture, to the highest ideals, to nobility of life, to all those qualities of mind and soul and character which are the finest aspirations of youth. May God bless Wilkes College during all the years to come, that it may be a bit of His Kingdom on earth.

May Wilkes College ever inspire and teach its sons and daughters to live like the children of God, in a brotherhood of intelligent, unselfish men and women of all lands.

Farewell to Bucknell Junior College of yesterday!

Fail to Wilkes College of today and tomorrow!

