

Wm. C. Hansen

Objective: Quality Education, 1940-1962

Now back to Stevens Point Teachers College came one of her own. For the first time an alumnus of the institution was given the greatest honor one's alma mater can bestow.

William C. Hansen was named seventh president. He had graduated from SPN's two-year course in 1911, later earning B.S and M.S. degrees at the University of Wisconsin.

Though appointed in October 1940, he could not leave his position as Superintendent of Schools at Stoughton, Wisconsin immediately, so Prof. Charles F. Watson served as acting president until December 1 when Mr. Hansen took charge.

And take charge he did, with a firm but kindly hand for 22 years as he steadily worked to improve the academic image of the school by improvement of its quality of education.

"I am more critical of what the college is doing now," ... "That is part of my job," he said when he took over.

President Hansen began to stress that, in addition to educating teachers, the college offered Junior College work for students who could take their pre-professional work before transferring elsewhere. Dr. Warren G. Jenkins was Dean of the Junior College.

The work in radio broadcasting, begun earlier, was strengthened with the appointment of Gertie L. Hanson as head of the Radio Workshop.

The entire east end of the basement in the Main building was devoted to the Radio Workshop with excellent studio facilities. This was an important program until in 1951 when WLBL was discontinued and live broadcasting from the college was ended. It has since evolved into the extensive Institutional Media service.

Enrollment dipped again in World War II, but the effect was somewhat offset by arrival of the 97th College Training Detachment of the Army Air Force. The college took care of some 1200 trainees in 1943 and 1944. By the autumn of 1945 men began to come back as they separated from the service, and from 1945-47 there was a navy V-5 educational program, which brought additional men to campus.

By 1947 it was necessary to add 11 new faculty members, a very large number for one year at that time.

The College was renamed Wisconsin State College and degrees were authorized for liberal arts courses in 1951 and the Junior College was merged with a new College of Letters and Science with Dr. Jenkins as its Dean.

Central State now offered the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Education degrees.

The liberal arts degrees required few changes, for the teacher education program had always had strong liberal arts emphasis. In fact some students were

graduated that first year, for they had gambled that the Regents would grant approval in time.

About 32 others were already beyond the second year in a similar gamble. The college had accepted them with no commitment that they could secure the desired degrees.

Once again the college found itself in 1954 faced with a budget slash and several tenured faculty positions were eliminated. Dropped from the full-time faculty were Fredrich Kremple, History; James R. Hicks, Chemistry and Walter Sylvester, Conservation, an action which caused campus consternation.

The strong local group of the Association of Wisconsin Teachers College Faculties was unable to prevent position eliminations, but did secure assurance that when the positions were reinstated the affected teachers would be offered them. All three later returned. Mr. Hicks eventually left for another position and Dr. Sylvester has since died, Dr. Kremple is now Dean of Learning Resources.

Probably the most important innovation during Mr. Hansen's term was the establishment of a Conservation Education major. This college was the first in the nation to offer such a program. What is now the College of the Natural Resources was to become one of the most important specialties of the school, one of national renown.

Fred J. Schmeeckle, an enthusiastic and dedicated conservationist, established the then one man department in 1946.

1950 saw construction of a second dormitory named to honor Regent Delzell. It also honored his father, James E. Delzell, who was on the faculty years earlier.

A home management house was established in the former H.B. Vetter residence at 1103 Main Street to replace Sims Cottage which was removed to make room for a new library.

The Library, long overdue, was planned for an enrollment of 1200 students with a book capacity of 150,000 volumes, in comparison to the holdings then of 51,000. The new Library was expected to be sufficient for a normal 50-year's growth. What an underestimate! It was overcrowded in 10 years.

The new Library opened in 1954 and it was that year that enrollment started its sharp and unanticipated climb. Students kept coming until an all time high of 936 were registered.

The freshmen class numbered 400, a number not expected until 1964. Economic conditions were good and each year more high school graduates knocked at the college door, reflecting the increase in level of education to which people aspired.

This led to unprecedented crowding, but with larger enrollments the state of Wisconsin began to provide more buildings and more operating money.

1954 was the year the faculty received rank as instructors, assistant professors, associate professors or full professors.

A new dormitory at Fremont and Clark Streets was named to honor the late Herbert R. Steiner, chairman on History and Social Science and Dean of Men. Mr. Steiner graduated from SPN in 1910 and returned to teach in 1919. He was noted for

the drama of his classroom lectures.

College and town leaders began to think in terms of land acquisition needs for the seam bursting years that apparently lay just ahead. President Hansen at that time was predicting an enrollment that might reach 1,500 in another ten years.

The College Union, then housed in the basement of Delzell Hall, was given a home of its own in a new building on the Orthman Demonstration School site. What is now called the University Center opened in 1959. It has since doubled in size and plans are underway to triple its size.

The next building, opened in 1960, was a physical education building at North Reserve and Fourth. Another dorm went up, the first in the vast north campus residence hall complex. It was a two-unit structure named Pray-Sims to honor the first two presidents. It was opened in 1962, President Hansen's last year in office.

On the academic side the college was granted the right to change its Music minor to a Music major in 1956. This was the first new major in a decade.

By 1957 when an Economics major was added the college offered Conservation, Music, Home economics, History, English, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, French, Education, General Science and Social Science. Graduate work was first offered in 1960.

Lyel N. Jenkins, a local attorney, appointed Regent after Mr. Delzell's death, was followed in that office by John C. Thomson, a Sentry Insurance Company executive.

By 1961 the college programs were restructured with the creation of a school of Applied Arts and a School of Education in addition to the School of Letters and Science. Dr. Paul A. Yambert was named Dean of the School of Applied Arts and Dr. Burdette W. Eagon, Dean of the School of Education.

Stevens Point suddenly found itself with a college that had mushroomed into a major establishment of learning far beyond the early dreams of the town. Millions of dollars had been invested and the end was not yet in sight.

When Mr. Hansen assumed the presidency the school had 786 students, a small faculty, few buildings and offered work for teacher preparation only. During his tenure the enrollment and faculty virtually tripled.

President Hansen was considered to be a man "with lofty educational aims whose feet were always firmly on the ground."

He was known especially for his ability to maintain harmony. For years he was president of the council of State Teachers College presidents when those schools were highly competitive.

He was elected president of the Wisconsin Education Association and given the Distinguished Citizen Award at Stevens Point as further tokens of the regard in which he was held at home and in the state. Before he left the presidency in 1962 he was asked to run for the state legislature, and later was elected to the state senate where he served with distinction.

This was the period of transition from Teachers College to State College and at Stevens Point the transition was made smoothly. The College was known as an institution offering quality education. This was the objective that President Hansen.