

## 12 Years After First Conceived By School District:

# 638 to Enter \$2.7 Million Vo-Tech School

## Doors Will Open On Wednesday At New School

This article, announcing the upcoming opening of the Juniata Mifflin Counties Area Vocational Technical School appeared in the August 30, 1968 edition of The Sentinel, just days before the school welcomed students for the first time on September 4, 1968.

The wheels of progress sometimes grind excruciatingly slow, but the results eventually make it all worth while.

In the making for the past 12 years, the area vocational-technical school for Mifflin and Juniata Counties is a prime example. As a matter of record, many of the 638 students who have been accepted for enrollment in the \$2.7 million school next month, were not of school age when the first steps were taken toward establishing the facility.

The first official action on the project was taken during a special convention of Mifflin County School directors on Sept. 27, 1956. At that convention, Clair F. Fitz, area coordinator of vocational and industrial education for the Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction, reviewed the contents of Act 352 which provides for the creation of area vocational-technical schools.

A cost study of such a facility was authorized by the directors during that convention.

Almost five years later, the directors were in a position to consider the actual creation of an area vo-tech school. On May 2, 1961, the question came before another special convention and was passed by a 47-7 vote.

During the next three years school officials conducted extensive studies of procedures necessary for such a facility and on Aug. 11, 1964 members of the Mifflin County Board of School Directors and the Juniata County board met in a preliminary meeting to receive actions taken to date and to discuss legal agreements, which eventually evolved into the present operating agency for the new school.

In October, 1964, the Mifflin County directors passed a resolution calling for the formation of the Juniata Mifflin Counties Joint Board of School Directors

to provide an operating agency for the new school. Later, on Oct. 29, 1964, 10 Mifflin and 13 Juniata County school boards approved an agreement which created the present vo-tech board.

From this point there was still a three-year wait until the school officials were in a position to advertise for bids. John L. Haughwout, architect, was retained by the two-county board to design the facility.

During the period his office was working on the plans and specifications for the building, he and W. Clay Burkholder, superintendent of the Mifflin County Schools, were working on an almost day-to-day basis with officials from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction.

Because of the newness of such a project, it seemed that each facet of construction, and every detail of the overall building project was in question until finally approved by DPI personnel.

Problems developed on the local level also. A certain amount of opposition to the proposed building site in the Lewistown Heights area developed and there was some talk of trying to get the site moved to another location.

During a "clean-the-air" session held in the Chief Logan library Oct. 23, 1966, the basis for the opposition turned out to be not necessarily the site, but the proposed scheduling program. At the time, the county offices were contemplating scheduling student attendance on a two-week-two-week basis. The administrators claimed such a program would create tremendous scheduling problems back in the home high schools.

During this session, a suggestion that the school be located at the former fair grounds was made, but because of the possibility of losing a quarter million dollars in

federal funds, this proposal was rejected.

The operating agency then was in a position that it had to advertise for bids and proceed with construction of the facility before March 1, 1967. An attempt to change the location of the building would have resulted in a delay of a year, at least.

Taking into consideration the problems which would have been created by the two-week-two-week schedule, the operating agency re-evaluated its thinking and came up with a half day schedule which met with the satisfaction of the two district administrations.

From this point, the agency was able to move without too much delay toward the completion of the project. Early in 1967 contracts were let for the construction of the project. John E. Groninger Inc. of Mexico was the successful bidder on the general construction contract with a low bid of \$704,029.

The heating, ventilating, and air conditioning contract was let to Walter N. Yoder & Sons of Cumberland, Md., on its low bid of \$458,640. D. C. Goodman & Sons of Huntingdon received the contract for the plumbing contract, and the electrical contract was awarded to R. D. Goss of Clearfield on his bid of \$340,812.

The successful bid on the kitchen equipment contract was submitted by Essbar Equipment Company of Wilmington, Del. Its figure was \$70,000. Penn Selin Construction of Selinsgrove was the successful bidder on the sanitary sewer line bid with a figure of \$28,000.

The total figures on the contracts, \$1,665,000 was actually \$80,958 lower than the original estimated costs of the project made by Haughwout.

During the next year the project moved along generally without any major delays. There were several scares however, as strikes of one kind or another threatened to delay delivery of various necessary supplies and equipment. The contractors, however, were able to work around these areas until shipment was made.

According to the county office, when the 1968-69 school year begins, Sept. 4, the school will be ready to accommodate the 638 students.