When the construction of the Central Instructional Building (CIB) is completed in August 2015, the 78-year-old vocational-shop building will be demolished. It is the last of the three original buildings that made up Carbon College in 1937.

The old SAC building that now lies in the ever-deepening shadows of a rising CIB, speaks of a rich and abiding past that has made possible the Utah State University Eastern of today and the promises of tomorrow. As Unarine Ramaru said: “Taking time to look back is a foundation on course to build a stable future.”

Here then, is a look back.

1937

The history of the building dates back to Gov. Henry Blood, who signed a bill authorizing a college to be established in Price on Feb. 25, 1937. Three buildings were included in the plan: main classroom building, combined gymnasium/auditorium and vocational-shop building.

The projected cost for the three buildings was $296,000 with the land for the classroom and vocational building donated by Price city. Mayor J. Bracken Lee deeded the property to the state for the college and the Carbon School District donated the property for the gymnasium.

The state board approved the site which they described as a “suitable campus provided to the state free of charge,” according to the April 8, 1937, Sun Advocate.

By September 1937, Cannon and Fitzer architects were designing the $272,000 campus. The state contributed $150,591 and the Public Works Administration $123,211. Price city requested a direct approach from Main Street and Fourth East to 400 North. Several private properties had to be condemned to clear the way for construction of the new street. The state legislature and state board accepted the proposal on condition a good street leading to the site be built.

Building permits totaling $476,800 for the city hall, Ambassador Hotel and Carbon Junior College were secured on Nov. 26, 1937.

1938

By Jan. 20, 1938, architects sent their plans to the regional PWA office in San Francisco for final approval. Applicants for a president and teachers at the new college were received.

Tuition at Carbon Junior College would be $17 per quarter or $51 per school year, the same tuition as elsewhere in the state.
Carbon School District paid $86,000 for the construction of the gymnasium-auditorium with bids opened March, 12, 1938 (The cost of the building came in $20,000 less that the projected cost). It was expected that all three buildings would be completed by the opening of the school year on Sept. 19, 1938 (191 days).

T.G. Rowland was the contractor for the vocational shop with 72 men working on the buildings. A strike by the Hod Carriers, Building and Common Labor Union on April 3, 1938, caused all but six laborers to walk off the job. Union specified 60 cents per hour for laborers, however the contractor said 55 cents had been accepted.

The vocational-shop was the farthest along of the three buildings, according to May 26, 1938, article in the Sun Advocate. “Brick work was a story high with the steel work complete. The job is one-fourth complete… Justice of the Peace Arthur N. Smith imposed a fine of $25 upon the contractor, and ordered him to obtain the permit, amounting to $116.” It was changed by the city building inspector after defendant stated college is state property and exempt.

The first concrete floor in the administration building was finished as well as brick work started. The gymnasium was the last building started and its contractor, Paul Paulson, said it would be ready for brickwork in a few days.

By May 26, 1938, Carbon Junior College was 40 percent complete. On July 12, six full-time and two part-time instructors were hired and on Aug. 18, six full-time staff hired. Elden B. Sessions was named as its president.

A crunch to finish the campus in 34 days on Aug. 18, had 80 men working: 25 carpenters, 15 plasterers, six lathers, 20 laborers, five cement finishers, three glazers and six painters.

Classes begin Sept. 19, 1938

The administration building and vocational-shop building were open the first day of school. Because the gymnasium was started later, it did not officially open until Oct. 1. With WPA assistance, the old county fair building north of the three buildings, was retrofitted to use as a music building, completing the original campus.

An article about the newest and best vocational shop in Utah made the front page of the Oct. 18, 1938, college newspaper. “The shop is fully equipped with such modern tools as are found only in the best shops in modern industry…any person 18 years of age or over may enter the trade school even though he has never gone to high school. The one requirement is success in his chosen trade. It requires as much brains to make a good top mechanic in any trade as it does to make a good doctor, lawyer or engineer.”

Vocational Trades expand

By 1942, the vocational-shop building became the training Mecca for students who might be drafted. In the 1942 college newspaper, the headline read, “College vocational department offers vital training course.” Courses open included airplane mechanics, auto mechanics, body and fender, welding and machine shop. Day and night classes were offered so young men who will be drafted soon “will enable them to secure promotions more readily than unskilled men. It opens the way for young or old people desiring to aid in the war effort.”

The student newspaper reported on Oct. 1, 1947, how well equipped the vocational-shop building was. “Under the direction of Mr. Roberts and E. A. Call, the Carbon College shop is one of the best equipped and well rounded in the state, and can handle about 200 students.” The shop has five departments including a machine shop, automotive electronics, woodwork, welding and industrial arts.

The Dec. 15, 1967, Golden Eagle reported the building housed the technical division of the college with Irel Longhurt as its head. Auto mechanics, technical math, technical drawing, machine/tool operation and welding departments were housed there. It had 14 boys and 4 girls registered for classes and was partially funded by the Manpower Development and Training Act.”
1975

The vocational-shop building was eventually replaced with a modern two-story building in 1975 named the McDonald Career Center. It housed nursing, cosmetology, automotive, diesel, welding, mine safety and machine shop programs.

Before the MCC building was completed, President Michael A. Peterson proposed to the Board of Regents at their Sept. 23-24, 1974, meeting if the College of Eastern Utah (formerly Carbon College and now Utah State University Eastern) could remodel the old vocational building into a student activity center. The Regents unanimously approved the request and reserved $750,000 for the project that would be funded by revenue bonds through the Department of Housing and Urban Development. It served as a student center until 1995 when the legislature approved a state-of-the-art student center built where the original gym stood. The Jennifer Leavitt Student Center was dedicated in 1999.

1999-2014

Now called the old SAC, the original vocational building continues to be used for the art department’s Gallery East, the communication department, “The Eagle” newspaper, cosmetology, testing center, health services, post office, Gear Up and Upward Bound program. It also has a 100-seat little theatre and ballroom used for physical education classes and dances. The original structure and outside brick remain unchanged with its interior remodeled to custom fit each college program offered throughout its 78-year history.

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