

Board of Trustees ruled defendant in airport suit

The University Board of Trustees will be included as a defendant in a suit against the Centre County Airport Authority as a result of a ruling made Wednesday by Centre County Court of Common Pleas Judge Richard M. Sharp. The judge's ruling was based on arguments heard Nov. 27 from attorneys representing the plaintiffs, the University and the Airport Authority. At the time, University lawyers argued against including the University in the suit, while the plaintiffs' attorney, Winifred Jones-Wenger said that since the University Park Airport is maintained by the authority but owned by the University, both parties should be

brought to court. The initial complaint was filed by the four plaintiffs Aug. 31 on behalf of the Mid-State Airport, located in Philipsburg. The suit maintains that the University Park Airport is illegally competing and interfering with services and flights already provided by Mid-State. The suit alleges that the airport, by leasing land from the University and contracting with a car rental agency and two commercial airlines to provide full commuter service to Pittsburgh, is duplicating services already available at the Mid-State Airport east of Philipsburg. The two airlines are Trans

Penn and Pennsylvania Commuter. The basis for the suit is the Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Act of 1945, which regulates competition between municipal and state funded facilities. Rich Lambert, Trans Penn's director of Operations, said full commuter service out of State College could be justified by the fact that most of the commuters to Pittsburgh live in the State College-Bellefonte area. Judge Sharp refused to comment on the case and said a court date had not been set because the suit was still in the pleading stages. —by Chuck Torisky

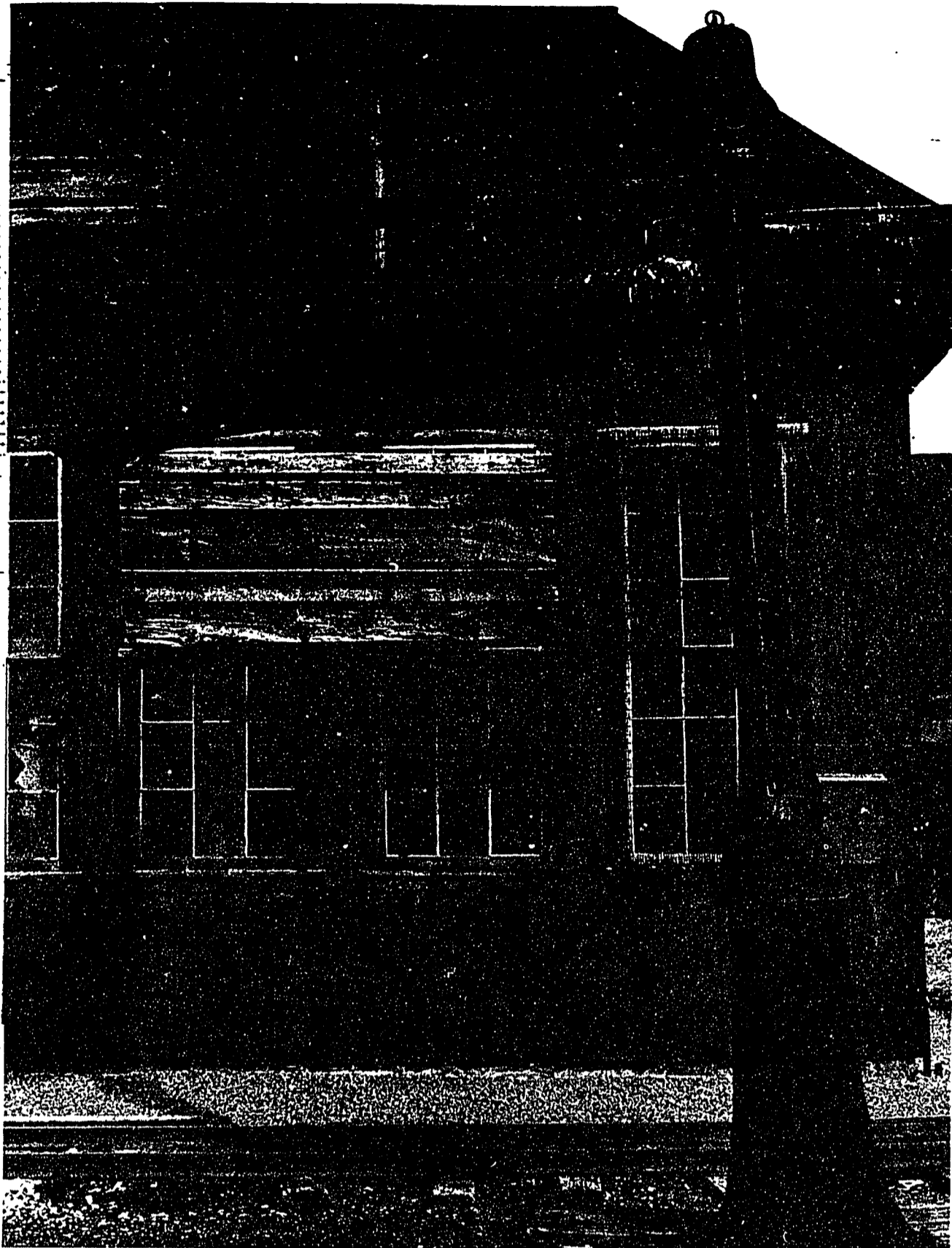


Photo by Mark McIntyre

All aboard? An excursion railroad still runs out of this depot in the little town of Orbisonia, near Mt. Union.

Novel deemed suitable for class

A special committee at the Penns Valley School District decided that a best selling novel several parents have complained about is suitable for use in a high school English course. Parents complained at a September school board meeting that "The Thorn Birds" by Colleen McCullough should not be read by high school students. As a result, the board directed high school principal John Rimmey to set up a committee to evaluate the book. The committee, chaired by Rimmey, was made up of a district administrator, a teacher, a librarian and citizen invited by one of the parents. Another citizen who was asked to serve declined. Because of "raw bedroom scenes," obscene language and statements "throughout the book" that showed disrespect for God the book should not be used at all, said Ella Baker, the

citizen who was invited to serve on the committee. Baker was the only member to vote against using the book. Kathy Wilson, one of the parents who complained, said she took her 16-year old son out of the class and intends to watch what books are assigned for other courses. The course, called "Best Seller Books," is an elective. Sex is described in the book as "all one-sided" because the man gets all the pleasure, Wilson said. She said she also objects to the book because the female characters "couldn't care less if they were married or not." Superintendent of Schools Robert C. Downie, said the district has not received any more complaints from parents since the decision. Rimmey would not comment on the committee's action. —by Mary Ann Harvey

Fraud alleged in bridge project

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Construction of a \$20.8 million bridge over the Monongahela River here was tainted with inefficiency, mismanagement, graft and shakedowns, according to newspaper reports quoting a state audit. The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette in its Monday editions said state Auditor General Al Benedict has compiled a 25-page document outlining alleged irregularities in the construction of the Birmingham Bridge, which replaced the old Brady Street Bridge. Benedict's office refused to release a copy of the audit to the Associated Press in advance of a press conference to be held this afternoon in Pittsburgh. The Post-Gazette also said that Patrick Smith, chief investigator in the audit, had his life threatened by telephone, found his car sabotaged and later had his car window smashed and a brief case full of confidential memos stolen.

The audit reportedly charges that personnel of PennDOT accepted gratuities from contractors and salespeople during construction of the bridge. It is also said to allege poor workmanship, payments for work never done and assignments of unqualified inspectors to oversee the work. Benedict, asked by the Post-Gazette to confirm the audit, said the findings are "a living testimonial, a monument to waste, mismanagement, bureaucratic blunders and a total lack of control on the part of the state and all those involved in the construction. "We have information that one of PennDOT's five project inspection supervisors assigned to the Brady Street Bridge received gifts of gasoline, automobile parts, food, appliances and other things from Joseph Bucheit and Sons, the bridge's general contractor," Benedict added.

The Pittsburgh Press also reported yesterday the president of the contracting firm, Pete Bucheit, said a PennDOT inspector attempted to shake him down for \$4,500. Bucheit reportedly blew the whistle on the unnamed inspector, who allegedly had been the recipient of the gifts, at a July 1977 meeting with area PennDOT officials, the Press said. PennDOT Secretary George Pulakos told the Associated Press he had not seen the report.

Crankcases an untapped oil reserve

HARRISBURG (AP) — The Governor's Energy Council is working on a plan to reclaim millions of gallons of oil from largely untapped sources found just about everywhere in Pennsylvania: automobile crankcases. With the help of a \$30,000 federal grant, the council hopes to have a pilot program operating in 17 counties by spring, Dennis Seipp, manager for the waste oil recycling program, said. The program could collect about 27

million of the 63 million gallons of waste oil generated each year in the state and sell it for seven cents a gallon to a recycling refinery, he said. "Waste oil is a valuable energy resource today," Seipp said.

Correction

It was incorrectly reported in The Daily Collegian on Friday that tuition at the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center is the highest rate in Pennsylvania. At \$4,440, Hershey's tuition is among the lowest of medical school tuition rates in the state.

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