

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

1990s

A college and a riverfront park

At a recent Progress Pottstown luncheon, borough officials expressed optimism about Pottstown's future. The following is one of a series about where we've been in the last five decades.

Early in 1989, the president of Montgomery County Community College proposed building four or five satellite campuses so students wouldn't have to commute to its main Blue Bell campus, which opened in 1972. Half the college's 7,000 students lived more than 10 miles away.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

Meanwhile, Pottstown's economic development organization, PAID, had engaged the Urban Land Institute for a follow-up study to update its 1976 plan.

PAID urged Pottstown to pull out all the stops to persuade the county commissioners to put a satellite campus in Pottstown.

The borough identified a 6-acre parcel along the Manatawny Creek owned by PECO, a willing seller, and paid \$25,000 for a feasibility study of the site. It agreed to pay \$96,000 to bring water and sewer lines to the site. It wined and dined the college board of directors to "sell" them on the location.

In 1993, a newly elected county board of commissioners considered an alternate site on High Street, where borough hall is now located. By 1994, however, the commissioners

returned to the original site. After several other delays for such items as wetlands relocation and an archaeological study, construction began in 1995 and the \$15 million campus opened in the fall of 1996.

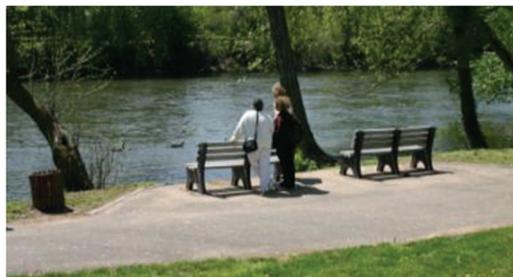
As the West campus evolved, the idea of adding more satellite campuses was dropped.

Previously, in 1991, plans were drawn up for a \$350,000 trail to be built along the Schuylkill River from Hanover Street to the Manatawny Creek. The trail, to be built with state and local funds, would be leased from PECO for \$1 a year.

When Riverfront Park opened in July 1992, it was an immediate success, drawing people who had never before been able to walk along the river. Ten years later, the borough bought the entire 30-acre wooded tract between the river and College Drive from PECO for \$646,000, using a county grant.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY built a \$15 million community college campus for an initial enrollment of 1,500 students in the fall of 1996 on what is now called College Drive, just south of downtown Pottstown.



RIVERFRONT PARK, stretching from Hanover Street west along the Schuylkill River and across the Manatawny Creek to the Route 100 embankment, was completed in 1992. It was the first time residents could enjoy direct access to the river.