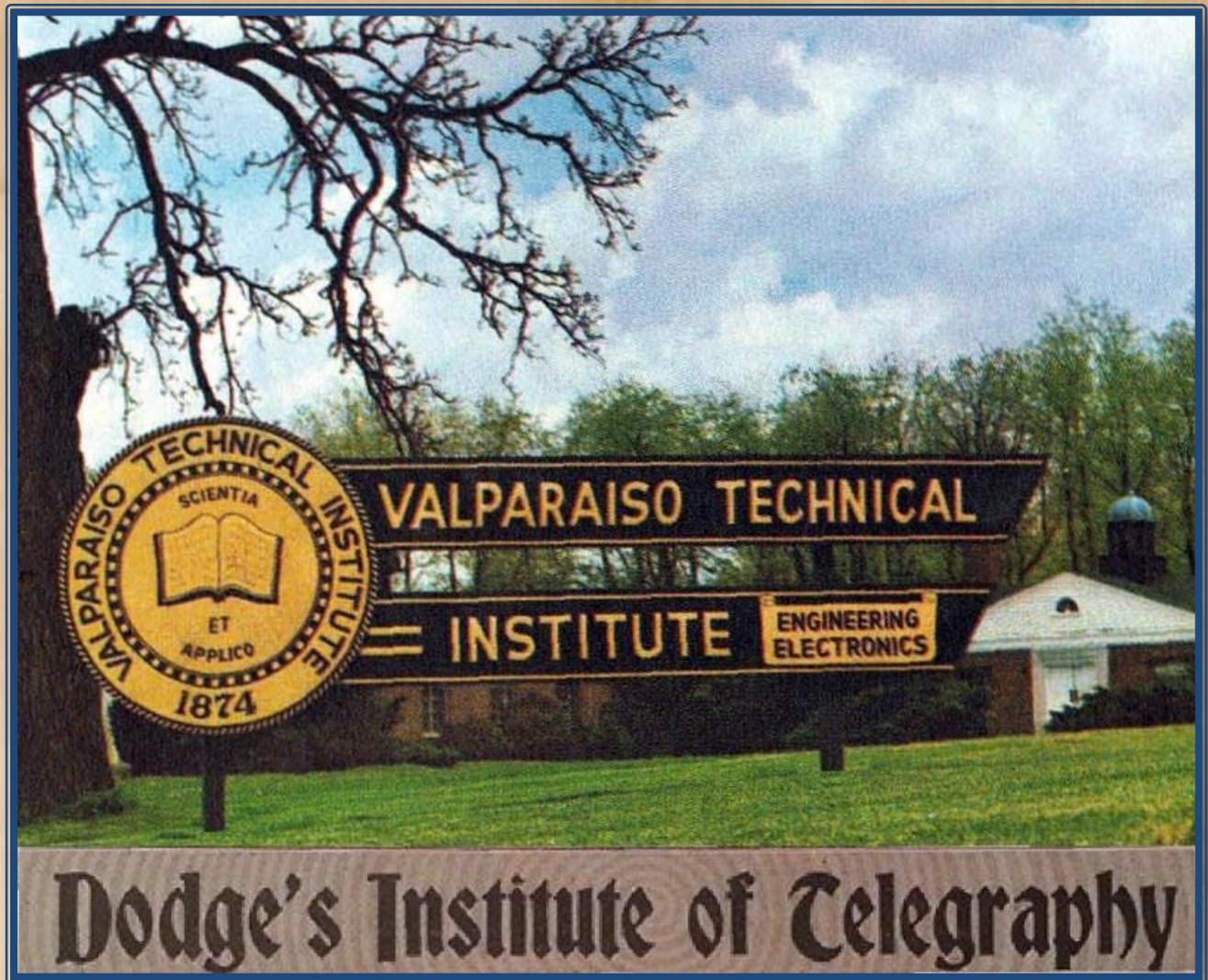


Dodge's Institute To Valpo Tech 1873 to 1991



By Leland L. Hite
Class of 1966
May 25, 2015

Foreword

Dodge's Institute of Telegraphy (DIT) began in December 1873 and became the largest school of its kind in the Western Hemisphere. The institute evolved into wireless telegraphy and courses in radio technology were added to the curriculum. In 1944, DIT was renamed Valparaiso Technical Institute (Valpo Tech or VTI). Rated among the top 10 such educational organizations in the world, Valpo Tech became the oldest electronic institute in the country. The school celebrated its final graduation on May 25, 1990, and closed its doors after the January 1991 graduation, sponsored by the Valpo Tech Alumni Association. As a quarter century has passed since the last VTI commencement ceremony, I present this article in honor of all DIT and VTI graduates on this Memorial Day, May 25, 2015.

Preface

I had been mostly disconnected from the Tech since my graduation in January 1966, when, like many of alumni, I reconnected last summer—thanks to the efforts of Mark Thompson (class of 1968), who created the VTI Facebook Page, and to Gene Mitchel (class of 1965), who created the VTI website. Many of us have wondered about the school's amazing history and often ask what happened to Valpo Tech. At the 2014 reunion gathering last August, alums attempted to answer that question. Somehow, the various answers never came together adequately to provide a satisfactory account of Valpo Tech's amazing history.

My curiosity peaked last winter, so I began to stitch together information from a wide variety of sources. This posting includes discoveries that help to explain the astonishing story of this Valparaiso institution. I sincerely thank the many graduates and friends of VTI for their contribution to this story and for their enormous effort to recover and preserve school artifacts that helped to provide the necessary accuracy.

Introduction

The school designed and operated the largest and most complete station for the instruction of spark-gap wireless telegraphy in the USA.

The first license granted by the federal government to permit an operator to use wireless communication was issued to the dean of the school and chief instructor.

During WWII, the FCC issued more communication licenses to graduates of Dodge's Institute of Telegraphy than to any other school in the country.

A graduate from DIT, Bill Putnam is known as the father of the recording industry and pioneered an entire industry.

The entire electronics industry is full of movers and shakers from Valparaiso. Every day you use a device that was invented by a Valpo Tech graduate.



The need to act quickly dominated the electronics industry from the beginning and rapidly accelerated. Fast thinking was critical to succeeding in the high-tech era. Invention of a single component such as a diode, vacuum tube, transistor, integrated circuit, microprocessor, LED, or laser, quickly and forever changed an industry. Graduates from both DIT and VTI



lived in an environment with few precedents. Often tasked with projects never before done, graduates constantly confronted the need for swift analysis and unforeseen decisions. Such protocol produced people accustomed to thinking outside the box by making up the rules as they moved forward. Eventually, the ability to think beyond traditional limits and to act speedily became normal—so normal that everyone assumed high-tech people occupy a hypersonic orbit.

High-tech culture may have raced, but education at Valpo Tech was thorough, detailed, and structured. Producing a quality education was no small task for the school. Instructors of the highest quality were allowed ample time to assist students after class. Abundant laboratory time for hands-on learning was a well-earned hallmark. Enjoying lunch together in the cafeteria (The Hut), students and instructors came to know one another through conversation beyond the classroom. Designed with care, the curriculum represented a comprehensive and disciplined approach to studying electronics that produced graduates sought after by the country's largest electronics companies. Typically graduating fewer than 20% of its enrollees, the school upheld excellence and skillfully avoided government intrusion into the curriculum by maintaining a for-profit tax status. Lowell Katz (1968 graduate from VTI) describes his experience at VTI as similar to graduating from a Marine Corps Boot Camp: "If you made it to graduation, you knew electronics from the bottom up."

In what way did Valpo Tech establish its reputation for preeminence in electronics? To find the answer, let us trace the school's history.



The original design for Memorial Hall (built in 1946) included a complete cafeteria but that never happened. Known as The Hut, this WWII Quonset hut cafeteria provided three meals a day and became a favorite hangout between classes. Constructed in the early 1930s, The Hut survived another 60 years before facing the 1990s wrecking ball.



Most alums will recognize Mildred (Millie) Graham as she serves coffee in The Hut to a VTI student.

1873 Invention and implementation of a continent-wide network of telegraph communication was truly revolutionary. Offering instantaneous communication, telegraphy, the email of that earlier era, provided command and control for Civil War military forces. By the last half of the 1800s, telegraphy was integral to business efficiency and had become a force helping propel the country forward.

For the railroad companies to communicate information on schedule changes, track assignments, and other news that had to reach distant stations more quickly than the mail service could provide, the telegraph was the most efficient medium. Telephone service had yet to appear, and Marconi had not even begun his experiments with wireless transmissions.

In a forthcoming article, Robert T. Rhode writes, "The 1873 economic decline is usually attributed to a slump in Europe, the Civil War in the U.S. and the Franco-Prussian War in Europe, and runaway growth in industry and agriculture. ... During Reconstruction [1856 to 1877], a railway boom occurred, but a feature peculiar to the development of railroads was the long delay in returns to investors from capital that had been sunk in building rail lines across vast distances. Land grants and subsidies to railroads by the federal government drew speculators to create an investment 'bubble.' As debts took a long time to repay, businesses in general found themselves less and less able to finance growth. Stresses and strains in the financial sector were beginning to appear. Suddenly, Jay Cooke & Company, a principal player in U.S. banking that was poised to receive a \$300 million federal loan, could not sell Northern Pacific Railway bonds, in which the firm was heavily invested, and the rumor that Cooke's credit was worthless spread like wildfire. The loan fell through, and, on the 18th of September in 1873, Jay Cooke went belly up. Banks failed, briefly closing the New York stock market. Many railroads went under and construction of new lines dwindled. Numerous businesses declared bankruptcy and farms were lost. Unemployment soared as real estate values plummeted. The financial lethargy ensuing after the initial panic persisted some six years. The 1870s came to be called the Black Seventies, and the financial downturn came to be known as the Long Depression."

On pages 40 and 41 in his book entitled *Mr. Speaker!: The Life and Times of Thomas B. Reed, the Man Who Broke the Filibuster* (Simon & Schuster, 2011), James Grant said, "The depression of the 1870s was different Prices fell and kept falling. ... The steam engine, the telegraph and railroad, among other countless laborsaving and productivity-enhancing devices, had reduced the cost of commodities and manufactured goods. ... There was no going back, no filling in the Suez Canal, no tearing up railroad track or pulling down telegraph poles."

In 1873, railroads were the most important form of long-distance transportation in this country. When the Panic of 1873 ensued, railroads feared loss of investment. As efficiency and telegraphy go hand-in-hand, the railroads thought they could keep their investors happy by increasing their efficiency.

The installation of telegraph lines usually accompanied the tremendous program of laying track, building stations, and acquiring locomotives and rolling stock. Integral to the railroad stations were the telegraph offices. Before long, the number of telegraph offices exceeded those trained to operate them. Without telegraphers, trains could not move efficiently and often could not move at all. Because the rail lines could not meet the increased demand for telegraphers from the ranks of the railroads' in-house training programs—and because the Panic of 1873 caused doubt in the minds of their investors—the railway companies needed to assure their financial supporters that the operating efficiency would continue to improve; consequently, the railroad companies explored a new approach for obtaining well-trained telegraphy operators.

While logic dictates that rapidly expanding railroads were inevitably going to seek ways of supplying more telegraph operators, the important realization is that the Panic of 1873 not only failed to halt the drive to supply them but may have prodded the rail companies to supply them *even sooner*.

As trains moved east from Chicago, Valparaiso was the first location with an established school suitable for a telegraphy education. In the waning months of 1873, officials of railway companies traveling thru Valparaiso requested the Northern Indiana Normal School and Business Institute, later known as Valparaiso College and still later as Valparaiso University (VU), to institute a program to train telegraphers and railway office managers, including courses in railroad accounting. The first class began with 12 students in December of that year.

1874 The great success of the first class encouraged the school to establish a Department of Telegraphy. At the beginning of the second semester (January 5, 1874), School Principal Henry Baker Brown asked G. A. Dodge, a telegrapher for the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne, and Chicago Railroad and operator at the Western Union Telegraph Office, to continue teaching and to establish a full course in telegraphy. Dodge managed the telegraphy department on a percentage basis: that is, railway companies paid Dodge the students' tuition with a guarantee of employment after successful completion of the program, and Dodge paid the Normal School a percentage for advertising the telegraphy work. The school was clearly a business venture for Dodge.



Shown in this 1874 picture is likely the second graduating class in front of the original location for DIT. The Northern Indiana Normal School and Business Institute owned the building.

1875 Valparaiso Male and Female College closed in 1871 as result of losses suffered during the Civil War. Henry Baker Brown came to Valparaiso in 1873 to look over the dilapidated and defunct Methodist College. Principal Brown then opened the Northern

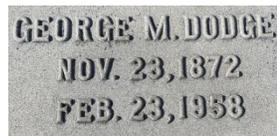
Indiana Normal School and Business Institute in the fall of 1873 with 35 students. Within one year, enrollment shot up to 300 and the Valparaiso City Council and Porter County government donated money to build up the campus. By 1875, enrollment was at 900 students, making Northern Indiana Normal School the largest of its kind in the nation.

1882 Continuing eight years under the management of G. A. Dodge, the telegraphy department grew steadily and was a big hit with the railway companies. Dodge was elevated to Station Agent in 1882 and sold his interest in the school to George L. Durand, an instructor. In 1885, Durand transferred his share in the department to a Mr. Clarkson, an operator at the Grand Trunk Railway Station.

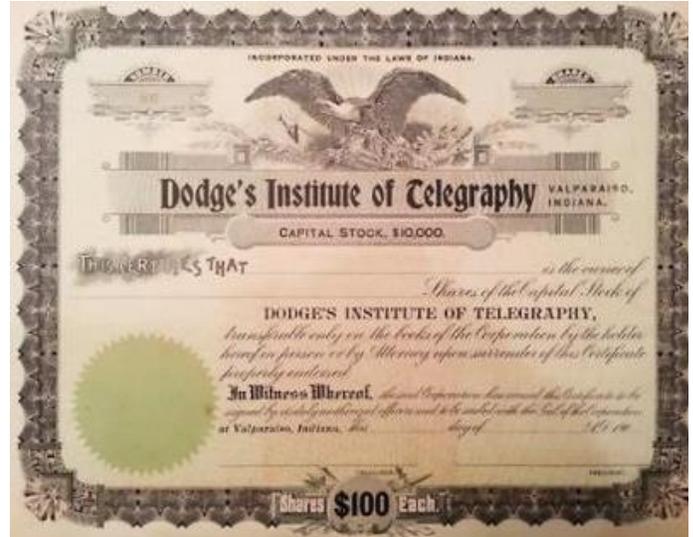
1885 Clarkson, now running the telegraphy department, met with little success and soon discontinued the school.

1887 A Mr. West, an operator at the Pennsylvania Station, restarted the school but was not able to enjoy success, thus closing the school again in 1887.

1891 On March 17, 1891, G. A. Dodge's son George Montgomery Dodge (11/23/1872 -2/23/1958) at age 19 reestablished the Department of Telegraphy, which retained its relationship with Northern Indiana Normal School.



1894 Sparked by a disagreement in respect to the department, G. M. Dodge foresaw the importance of a stand-alone institution. He seceded from Northern Indiana Normal School in March 1894 and established Dodge's Institute of Telegraphy as an independent institution. Understanding better than most the importance of good advertising and marketing, Dodge propelled his endeavor into becoming the largest telegraphy school in the Western Hemisphere. DIT proudly became the premier location for a telegraphy and railway accounting education.



A shrewd businessman, G. M. Dodge provided the public an opportunity to purchase stock in his expanding telegraphy enterprise.



Success accelerated the need for expansion, so construction began in 1900 on the front part of the new DIT Wire Telegraphy Building on Monroe Street (aka the Morse Building). The front was finished with rock-faced limestone block. In 1904, the rear part of the same building was added.

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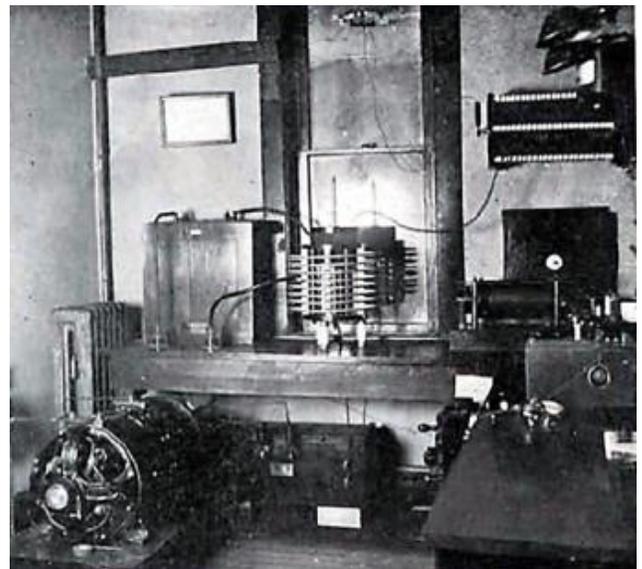
1901–1904 Marconi completed the first successful transatlantic radio communication in 1901. Wireless technology was emerging! In 1904, the U.S. Navy instituted time signals broadcast by telegraphy from the Navy Yard in Boston

1905 John Fleming invented the vacuum tube diode (the Fleming Valve) in 1905 that later helped Lee de Forest create the three-element vacuum tube called the Audion, which was one of the most important developments in the history of electronics.

1906 On Christmas Eve 1906, Reginald Fessenden used a synchronous rotary-spark transmitter for the first radio program broadcast from Ocean Bluff–Brant Rock, Massachusetts. Ships at sea heard a broadcast that included Fessenden playing "O Holy Night" on the violin and reading a passage from the Bible.

1909 Paul F. Godley, an instructor, established at DIT the first Department of Wireless Telegraphy and Wireless Engineering in this part of the world. He put into operation a 3 kW wireless telegraph station, the largest and most complete station for the instruction of wireless telegraphy in the country. The word *radio* was first used in 1887 but not often connected to wireless technology until the early 1900s. Portions of the original station were on exhibit in the Wilbur H. Cummings Museum of Electronics.

1913–1921 The year 1913 found Godley on the Amazon-to-the-Andes radio service for the Brazilian government, during which time his experiences were as varied as they were instructive. In 1914, Godley returned to the United States and began a study at his home in Leonia, New Jersey, where he developed the shortwave regenerative



Paul F. Godley, an instructor at DIT, established in 1909 the first Department of Wireless Telegraphy and Wireless Engineering in this part of the world. He put into operation this 3 kW Spark-Gap Wireless Station, the largest and most complete station for the instruction of wireless telegraphy in the country. By 1915, he was largely responsible for the production of the famous Paragon Radio and became known as Paragon Paul.



Paul F. Godley is recognized by the American Radio Relay League, ARRL, for accomplishing the first reception of signals overseas from American Amateur Radio Stations in December 1921. Photo source: Radio Broadcast magazine, May 1922.

receiver, now so familiar to American radio enthusiasts. He was widely credited with being the first to adapt Armstrong's regenerative circuit to shortwave amateur radio use.

Toward the end of 1915, Godley became a member of the Adams-Morgan Company, Upper Montclair, New Jersey, and was largely responsible for the production of Paragon Radio. During WWI, Godley served as design engineer at the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of America's factory in Aldeen, New Jersey.

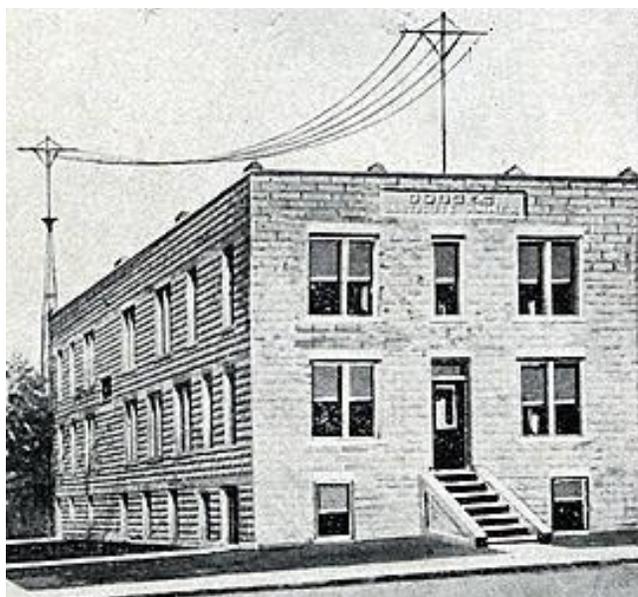
Recognition for the first overseas amateur radio connection was awarded to Godley by the American Radio Relay League in March 1922 with the Marconi Award (in recognition of scientific achievement in accomplishing the first reception of signals from amateur radio stations at Ardrossan, Scotland, December 1921)

1910 Constructed in 1910 and erected together with the boarding hall, the DIT Wireless Telegraphy Building on Monroe Street, was located east of the Wire Building.

1910 Experiential radio broadcasting began on January 13, 1910, from the Metropolitan Opera House using a 500W (watts) transmitter. The audience was limited to those listening to receivers at the De Forest Radio Laboratory, on board ships in New York Harbor, and in large hotels on Times Square in New York City.

1912 The Wireless Ship Act required all U.S. ships traveling over 200 miles off the coast of the USA to be equipped with wireless radio.

1912 Wilbur Boyd Perine, a 1912 DIT graduate, went on to be the chief radio officer on the Presidential Yacht, the *Mayflower*, during WWI.



Dodge's campus was upgraded in 1910 with this rock-faced limestone block Wireless Telegraphy Building on Monroe Street, east of the Morse Building. Note the antenna for the new spark-gap station. When the experimental license for station 9XD was renewed for one year in 1921 by the Department of Commerce, Bureau of Navigation, Radio Service, the transmitter was specified as a Marconi composite variable arc and vacuum tube circuit. This configuration provided capability of 150 nautical miles with a spark frequency of approximately 480 m. In addition, the license detailed the antenna (wavelength 310 m) configuration to be six 7/22 wires (seven strands of #22 wire) flat top and cage, supported by no more than three masts. The aerial could not exceed a height of 100 ft, with a 100 ft maximum horizontal section, 150 ft maximum vertical section (total length measured from the antenna to the apparatus), and a ground connection not to exceed 10 ft.

Most of the courses in wireless at DIT were about spark-gap transmitters.

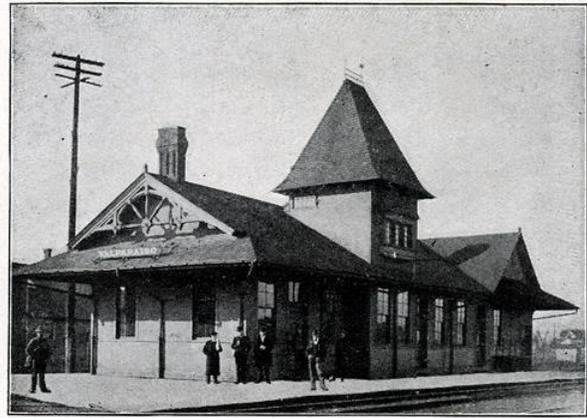
1914 DIT received an experimental license 9XD and brought the 3 kW Marconi Spark-Gap Station on the air.

1918 Edward H. Armstrong patented the super-regenerative circuit, providing the framework for a highly efficient and low-cost radio receiver. Commercial broadcasting had emerged! By 1920, Armstrong, unsuccessful at selling his patents since 1918—in part because the government had frozen patents—decided to license “non-transferable” patents and 20 companies quickly applied. The Precision Equipment Company of Cincinnati was on the list.

Conceived because of the need to sell more radios, Station 8XB at the Precision Equipment Company was the first station specifically designed and operated for the express commercial purpose of broadcasting useful and entertaining matter for the benefit of the radio public of the United States. Radiocasting began in February 1920 from station 8XB.

Several radio stations claim to have been the first public radio station. Some include KDKA in Pittsburgh and 9XM at the University of Wisconsin. Using vacuum tube technology, station 8XB at the Precision Equipment Company is considered the first.

Westinghouse purchased Armstrong’s patent and froze the sale of licenses. Precision could not transfer its licenses to another company, but it could produce regenerative radios.



Grand Trunk Station

G. M. Dodge felt strongly students should learn telegraphy by actual experience with instruments that connect not only with the school’s telegraph circuits but also with real railroad circuits; for that reason, in 1911 Grand Trunk Western Railway and Western Union Telegraph Company wires connected directly to Dodge’s Institute of Telegraphy.



The 1917 course catalog offered this view of the Advanced Intermediate and Graduating Departments in Dodge Hall on Monroe Street.



Standing today and used for apartments, the old DIT Wireless Building, remodeled with rock-faced looking concrete block, serves as apartments. Photo by Gene Mellenthin



Today, the old Morse Building has been rehabbed with concrete block having a rock-faced appearance and serves as apartments. Photo by Rod Bodnar

1920 George J. "Jack" Gray, a 1917 DIT graduate, joined the Precision Equipment Company in Cincinnati, building regenerative radios.

The Crosley Radio Empire expanded. Wanting to sell more radios, Powel Crosley, Jr., expeditiously added a broadcast transmitter to the company. Beginning with a 4-tube 29W transmitter, later increased to 100 W under the call sign 8XAA, Crosley began broadcast operations. By 1922, he received a limited commercial license for 50 watts from President Hoover and the Department of Commerce for broadcast on 360 meters, with the call sign WLW. Crosley's quick decision to enter the broadcasting businesses resulted in selling 500 radios per day.



This idle building on Lincolnway (formerly the Pitkin and Brooks Glass Company from the Chautauqua Industrial Park) was remodeled in 1941 to provide barracks for 500 WWII soldiers in training at DIT. The building featured an upper floor used as an assembly for convocations during the war efforts. Following WWII, G. M. Dodge began and operated his correspondence school from this building. Eventually becoming classrooms, laboratories, and the library on 15 March 1944, the structure was renamed Dodge Hall.

1922 Crosley continued his success by purchasing Precision Equipment Company for access to the regeneration patent. So now Jack Gray worked for Powel Crosley, Jr. By 1927, Gray moved to the Crosley Radio Corporation as a broadcast engineer.

1922–1933 Dr. J. B. Hershman headed the Physics Department at Valparaiso University until 1927. By 1928, Hershman was an instructor and graduate student at Indiana University, where he earned his PhD in 1932. From 1929 to 1931, Hershman was acting department head of physics at Indiana State Teachers College.

1926 Instruction on vacuum tubes began at DIT.

1929 The USA manufactured 4.5 million radios.

1933 DIT formed the *Dodge Alumni Association* (DAA).

1934 Because of the Great Depression, Dodge's Institute of Telegraphy closed for one year reopening in 1934. Dr. Hershman and Wilbur H. Cummings (an instructor at DIT and eventually president of the alumni) persuaded G. M. Dodge to reopen the institute in 1934 and expand the curriculum to include modern radio. Hershman then became director of radio, and he added courses in radio engineering and radio servicing. In the late 1930s, aviation radio and police radio courses were added with further expansion to include marine radio courses.

About this time, two other winds were blowing. While DIT was floundering during the Great Depression, ominous events in Hitler's Germany gradually forced the United States to think seriously about preparing for war. Hershman discerned an opportunity at the intersection of these developments, and he made history for Valparaiso and the nation.

Prior to America's entry into World War II, Hershman used his organizational skills to position the dying institute for a brighter future. He obtained a federal contract to train Army Signal Corps inductees in the methods of electronic communications systems.

During the war, the Dodge Radio Institute trained several thousand GIs for the United States Army Signal Corps. Groups of soldiers spent weeks in Valparaiso—unit after unit, totaling well above a thousand troops before the war ended in August of 1945.

Existing facilities were insufficient to train and house this large number of students, so the school began building again. One Center Street became a campus assembled from the remnants of the Chautauqua Industrial Park (1911–1918). An old glass factory (Pitkin & Brooks) was remodeled into soldier barracks and became known as Dodge Hall. Eventually becoming the school's library, study hall,



Pictured are the front and rear views of Dodge Hall photographed at the 2014 reunion gathering. Photo by L. Hite



Headquarters for the Home Herald Press in 1887, then the Powers, Higley & Company in 1913 (manufacturers of the famous Elementary School Chautauqua Desk), the building transitioned into a roller rink and finally into J. B. Hershman Hall in 1941.



J. B. Hershman Hall featured classrooms, laboratories, and administrative offices.

laboratories, and classrooms, Dodge Hall featured an upper floor that was used as an assembly for convocations. The plant of Chautauqua Manufacturing became J. B. Hershman Hall, which featured classrooms, laboratories, and administrative offices. It also housed the Wilbur H. Cummings Museum of Electronics. The school was the only Army Signal Corps training facility that was housed in its own buildings. Back then, technical schools typically leased space; by owning its entire campus, VTI was unusual.

1934–1939 Crosley received a broadcast license to operate station WLW at a staggering 0.5 million watts in 1934. For five years, WLW was heard around the world. Circling the globe, "big radio" became known as "The Nation's Station, WLW" from Cincinnati.

Students authored and published their first newspaper, *The Grid Leak* (a precursor to *The Modulator*, *The Tech Satellite*, *Tech Times*, *The Valpoon*, *7400*, and *Great Expectations*).

1937 Jack Gray transferred to WLWO, the 75 kW Crosley Overseas Operations. Prior to December 7, 1941, this was the most powerful shortwave transmitter available to the United States government, broadcasting into South America and Europe.

1938 At about this time, Milton Tasker "Bill" Putnam graduated from DIT. Bill quickly became a renowned American audio engineer, songwriter, producer, studio designer, and businessman. He has been described as "the father of modern recording." He was the inventor of the modern recording console and has been widely recognized as a key figure in the development of the postwar commercial recording industry.

1939 J. B. Hershman purchased Dodge's Institute of Telegraphy.

1940 With a subscription cost of 50¢ per year, Dodge's alumni association quarterly publication, *The Bleeder* (a precursor to *Val-Tech News*), began. The name was from the bleeder resistor used then and today in high-voltage power supplies.

1941 WWII psychological warfare via radio was peaking. Germany had 68 shortwave transmitters, Japan had 42, but the USA had only 13. The most powerful shortwave transmitter was the Crosley Overseas Station, WLWO, at 75 kW.

Crosley Overseas Broadcast Organization developed the top secret Reentrant Rhombic Antenna operating at 98% efficiency.

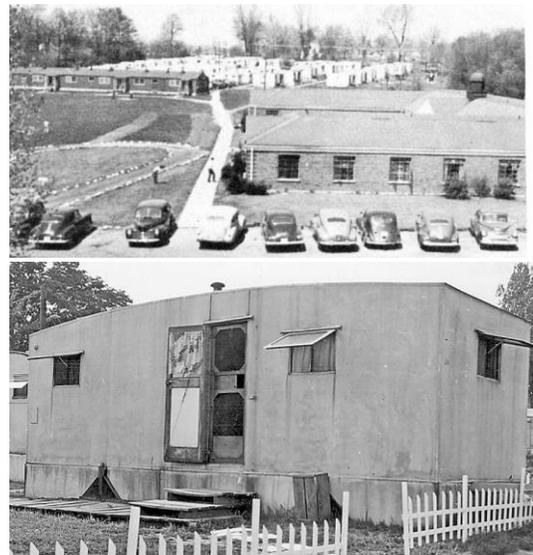


Shown is Bill Putnam in the studio on Sunset Strip in the 1960s. This recording session used one of Bill's original vacuum tube designs for a mixing board. Photo by co-authors Jerry Ferree (VTI graduate, class of 1957) and Bob Bushnell, from their book *From Downbeat to Vinyl*.

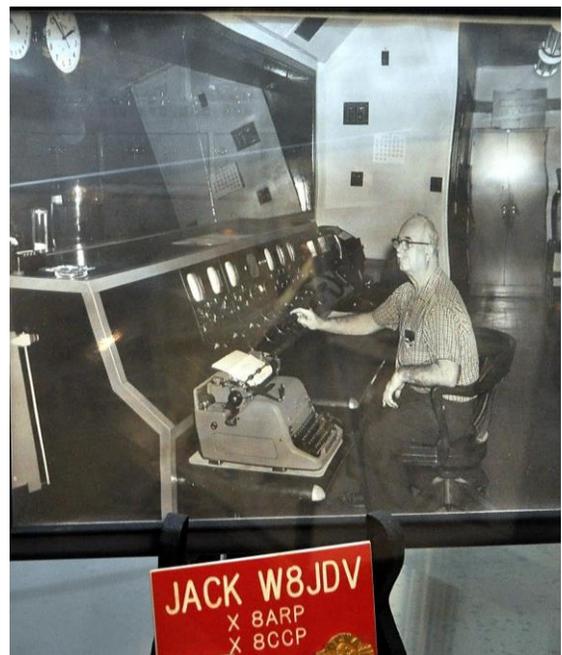
1941 G. M. Dodge retired from Dodge's Institute of Telegraphy and was succeeded as president by J. B. Hershman. The lease on school properties transferred to Dr. Hershman. The institute immediately expanded in scope and enrollment, in part because of WWII and the Army Signal Corps training, when Hershman purchased 18 acres that included buildings now known as Dodge Hall, J. B. Hershman Hall and Memorial Hall.

Daily adjustments at both DIT and the City of Valparaiso smoothly accommodated the high volume of WWII students. For example, Dodge Hall on Monroe Street trained and housed 500 soldiers while Dodge Hall on Lincolnway and Hershman Hall at One Center Street handled another 500. Lodging and classrooms in Lembke Hall at Valparaiso University served another 300 students. The Elks Club provided two large classrooms, while the Administration Building at Valparaiso University allocated three more. The VU Gymnasium housed 200 soldiers with another 100 lodging in the Exhibition Hall at the Porter County Fairgrounds. The recently disbanded Civilian Conservation Corps Camp supplied boarding and classrooms for an additional 300. Lantz Mfg. Co. (manufacturer of motor driven sickle grinders and barn trolley balanced hay grappling forks) furnished classroom space. Stiles Hall at Valparaiso University provided additional quarters along with the Bell Building on Morgan Boulevard. Initially soldiers ate at local restaurants and eventually Millicoma Lodge became the mess facilities.

Although many of the DIT instructors attempted to enlist, their effort to train soldiers was considered so essential to the war effort that they were told to remain on their jobs. U.S. Army Major J. A. Perry of the third U.S. Army Recruiting Battalion in Columbus, Ohio, attached to the school, helped with the program and provided six additional personnel as officers, clerks, and medical assistants. Major Perry set up command headquarters at the Civilian Conservation Corps Camp where he took charge of the camp, and the Dodge's Institute supplied code tables, code equipment, typewriters, and instructors. Dr. Hershman expanded the instructor count to well over 30 from the previous 10.



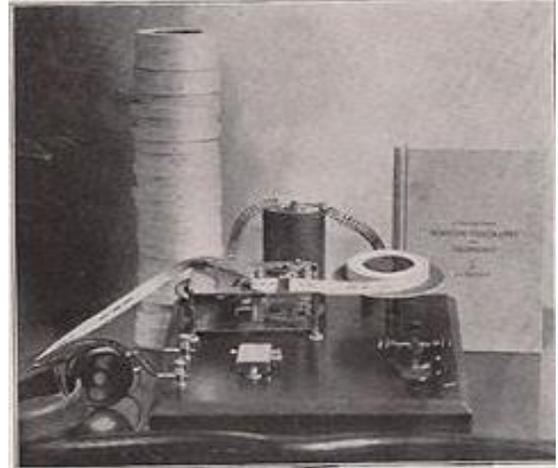
WWII drove the sudden need for additional student housing: a need quickly satisfied with the use of small trailers situated behind the cottages and to the side of Memorial Hall.



At the controls, Jack Gray adjusts one of six 250 kW transmitters at the Voice of America station in West Chester, Ohio. Photo courtesy VOA Museum

Parallel to telegraphy training at the reactivated Civilian Conservation Corps Camp, special arrangements were made for Dr. H. W. M Cody of Valparaiso University to train Civil Air Patrol students from Valparaiso, Hobart and Gary in air navigation and meteorology, all for the war effort.

1943 The Voice of America (VOA) began at the direction of President Roosevelt. Crosley engineers designed and built six 200 kW transmitters, 14 high-efficiency directional Reentrant Rhombic Antennas, and 8 curtain antennas for the VOA. Before World War II, all American shortwave stations were in private hands, but that was about to change. Jack Gray, a 1917 DIT graduate, was appointed transmitter supervisor at VOA's first relay station located near Cincinnati in Bethany, Ohio. Clayton J. Heller, a 1939 DIT graduate, joined the Crosley operation.



Dodge offered correspondence training as early as 1909 and eventually adapted the National Automatic Telegraph Transmitter for home study by correspondence students. Together with the Dodge authored *Telegraph Instructor*, the package featured a key and sounder, transmitter, 27 paper tape reels (containing about 10,000 words), and two cells of dry batteries.

Morse code was still an important form of long-distance communication in the early days of radio. Because overseas telegraphy, military, and even police dispatchers were required to know code, students were still required to study Morse code at DIT until May 1943.

The Army Training Program officially ended September 1943. Lasting 16 months, the program trained 1,460 men for the Signal Corps and the Army Air Forces. Forty percent of the men had trained as radio mechanics (technicians) with most receiving radar training. The school had maintained a staff of 35 employees that included personnel to manage off-site housing. Enormous pride existed within the school and with the City of Valparaiso for providing an important contribution to the war effort.

After the war, Dodge Hall was converted from Army barracks into a correspondence school. (After 1945, the name "Dodge Hall" usually referred to the building at the Lincolnway address.) Many former students had wished to continue their education and had asked the school to train by mail. Unlike some other correspondence schools, the Dodge school did not allow instructors to mail lab equipment to students; instead, correspondence students were required to spend one to two months in Valparaiso for hands-on laboratory work. School officials offered assistance to graduates to develop their ideas into patents and then to help with merchandizing. Now that the war had



ended and the student body was smaller, the extra time provided staff with more opportunity for research, development, and post-war planning.

Characteristically, J. B. Hershman promptly gained a blanket contract from the Veterans Administration to train soldiers mustered out of service at no cost to them. Studies included radio, television, FM, and electronics, thereby assuring DIT a solid foothold on the future.

The technology involving radar was top secret in the early 1940s; however, the training given to soldiers at VTI became the basis for them to continue learning the classified technology once they left the school.

1944 Because enormous expansion of the radio industry caused less need for telegraphers and more demand for well-trained radio engineers and technicians, the name for Dodge's Institute of Telegraphy changed on March 15, 1944: a year of tremendous change at the school. Better describing its emerging core business of radio and electronics, the name Valparaiso Technical Institute soon achieved worldwide recognition. By today's standards, VTI was a postwar junior college but properly described as a "for-profit institution."



The Dodge Alumni Association changed the name of the newspaper from *The Bleeder* to *Val-Tech News* beginning with the spring edition. The former name, *The Bleeder*, was chosen from a number of suggestions by former students but did not entirely meet the approval of all concerned. For some, "bleeder" was too closely associated with such terms as "blood sucker" or "leech."

1945 In March, Valparaiso University purchased both buildings on Monroe Street, formerly home for Dodge's Institute of Telegraphy school buildings, and prepared them to house 80 students from VU. Over \$25,000 was spent by the university on repair and alteration to the buildings that included a cover corridor connecting the dormitories with a center courtyard. On-campus housing at VU increased to 600 students with this purchase but fell short of the expected housing requirement in the fall. The buildings became known as Dodge Hall, a VU dormitory.

By 1945, the word "radio," first used in 1887, transitioned to the word "electronics," first used in 1910, as a better description for evolving technology.

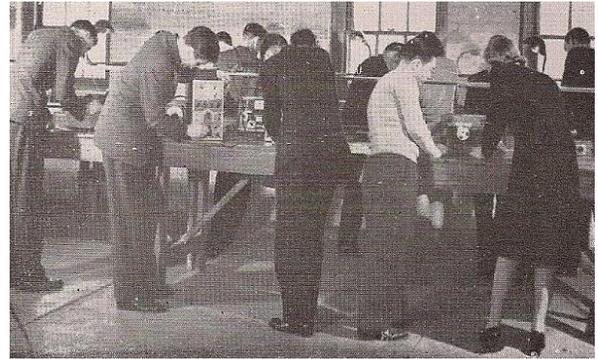
1946 Among the unsung heroes of DIT or VTI, Jack Gray, a quiet and unassuming man, enjoyed considerable achievements. His success within the Powel Crosley radio and broadcast empire and the VOA station was obvious to Dr. Hershman. According to Bill Putnam, a 1939 DIT graduate, Hershman studiously maintained contact with graduates, particularly those doing well in their careers. In addition, *The Bleeder* and *Val-Tech News* regularly published career updates from graduates. By this time, national attention to the value of radio had increased substantially with the achievement of Crosley's immensely powerful broadcast station, heard worldwide. (Farmers across the U.S. reported hearing WLW in their barbed-wire fences!)

Success of the school during the WWII era caused Hershman to envision the need for expansion. While the school was profitable, finances could not support development without new sources of funding. Hershman took notice of two industry successes: Crosley and Putnam.

In just a few years after graduation, the inventive Bill Putnam began scoring triumph after triumph in the audio recording business. In 1946, Putnam founded one of America's first independent recording studios, Universal Recording in Chicago. Bill was deeply appreciative of the education provided by DIT and remained in contact with the school. He often called Hershman and R. Clويد Patton to discuss recent technology developments at his company and within the recording industry.

Mr. Putnam graciously invited me to stay at his residence during the summer of 1965 when I worked in the development lab. Often at breakfast, lunch, or dinner, Bill would comment on and reminisce about his days at DIT and his conversations with Hershman and others at the school. Bill commented that both Hershman and Patton wished to stay on top of industry developments by sharing ideas and innovations.

Hershman fully appreciated the significance of Putnam's ingenious ideas of making high-quality transportable recordings available. As done by several enterprises at that time, Hershman took notice of Crosley's commercial success by borrowing a page from Powel



Hands-on laboratory work accented classroom learning and became a hallmark of the school. Unlike other correspondence schools, Dodge required distance learning students to spend between 20 and 40 days in the laboratories at Valpo Tech prior to graduation.

Crosley's playbook. Hershman, Emmett Mellenthin (a 1935 DIT graduate, station engineer at WAIT News, and partner in the Sound Industries Company in Chicago), and Jerome Dee (owner of an advertising agency in Chicago and announcer at WAIT) decided to build a for-profit radio station. Hershman planned to use his profits from the venture to augment funding for expansion of his school. Hershman, Mellenthin, and Dee formed the Northwest Indiana Radio Company (NIRC).

1947 Unknowingly, one of the seeds for VTI's demise developed early when, in 1947, NIRC applied to the FCC for an AM broadcast license, which was expected within two to five months. The three founders could not have predicted that 18 years would pass before receiving the license in 1965!

1952 Continuing his desire to expand, Dr. Hershman acquired the Indianapolis Electronic School (IES) formerly owned by the Indiana Electronic and Television Corporation located in the Mansur building, 312 East Washington, Indianapolis. Since 1947, the school had provided instruction in radio broadcasting, television servicing, and electronics. IES came into being largely because of the GI bill after WWII, as did hundreds of similar schools.

By 1952, enrollment exceeded 200 students, the majority of whom attended night classes. Ronald M. Cox, former vice president of the Indianapolis school, became manager, Hershman was president, and Mrs. Edna W. Davis of Valparaiso was secretary and treasurer. Their plan was to increase the daytime enrollment to help meet the heavy demands of electronic industries for trained specialists and technicians. Hershman commented that, for many years, Valparaiso Technical Institute had perceived the need for a school with curricula similar to its own, where students could have greater opportunity for evening classes and part-time instruction.

Since Indianapolis was rapidly becoming one of the leading centers in the United States for electronic manufacturing, the operation of the Indianapolis school was planned as a fitting extension of services offered by VTI. This was another of J. B. Hershman's good business decisions. Still today, Indiana is proud to be the home of the largest electronic manufacturing corporation in the world. More PC boards annually ship from Delco Electronics in Kokomo than anywhere else.



Indianapolis Electronic School, located at 633 North Pennsylvania Street, shared the building with a dance school until its end in 1962. Earlier, the building transitioned from a Girls' Classical School Residence (1907-1920), to the Indiana Dental College (1920-1925), to The Lincoln Chiropractic College (1926-1935). The need for electronics training in the Indianapolis area was so great that a second school established in the same building, Sams Technical Institute, later renamed the ITT Technical Institute. You may recognize SAMS Technical Publishing (formerly the Howard W. Sams Company) as publisher of the famous Sams Photofacts service manuals.

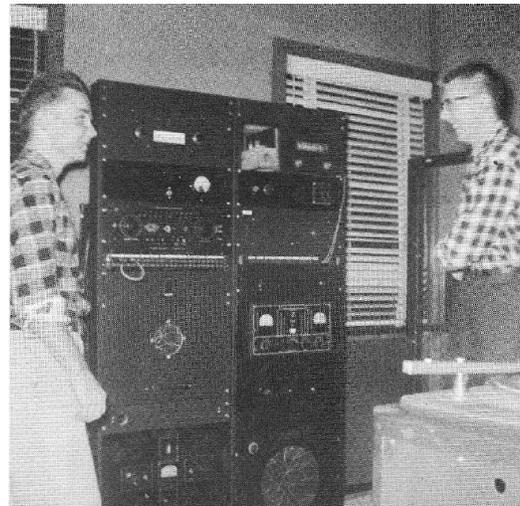
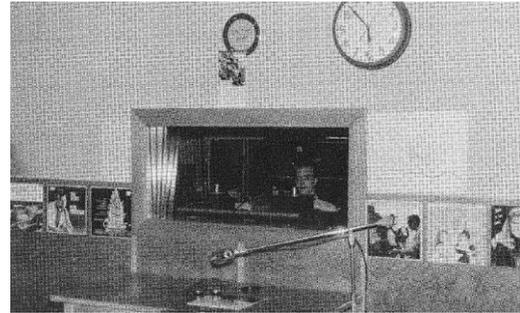
1953 On August 7, 1953, the Valpo Tech Alumni Association (VTAA) incorporated and was firmly established on campus to provide social, educational, and service benefits to its membership. The association declared that "all graduates of the school formerly known as 'Dodge' shall be known as Valparaiso Technical Institute Graduates."

Classes at Valpo Tech after WWII were comprised mostly of veterans under the GI Bill. By 1953, Valpo Tech enrollment was about 85% GIs.

1956 VTI continued as one of the leading electronic schools in the country expanding in stature, scope, and enrollment. Unfortunately, Dr. Hershman died from injuries suffered in an auto accident in Iowa while attending a meeting as president of the National Association of Technical Schools. Gone with him were the fires of innovation and organization. Dr. W. D. A. Peaslee, a former instructor, served as Chief Administrative Officer until his death in 1959. He transitioned the school from a successful entrepreneurial organization into a well-run departmentally structured operation.

1957 By the mid-1950s, Bill Putnam was one of the most sought-after recording engineer-producers in the United States, and Universal Recording had become so successful that clients including Nelson Riddle, Mitch Miller, and Quincy Jones began urging him to open a facility on the West Coast. In 1957, Putnam sold his interest in Universal Recording, and, with support from Frank Sinatra (eventually marrying his assistant Miriam, aka Tookie) and Bing Crosby, he established a new company called United Recording Corporation and moved to Hollywood. He continually sought VTI graduates and remained in constant contact with Dean R. Clويد Patton. Jerry Ferree, VTI class of 1957, an employee, co-authored (with Bob Bushnell) a book about Putnam entitled *From Downbeat to Vinyl*. Other VTI people involved with Putnam were Dean Patton, Stephen Poupore, Michael D. Holloway, Robert J. Osmolski, Lee Hite, and more we are hoping to identify.

1959 Following the death of Dr. Peaslee, Dr. Hershman's widow, Nettie, the majority stockholder, appointed her eldest son, Edward, to the Board of Directors. Edward (Ed) became president in 1962, and his brother Arthur (Art) became vice president. Both served until the end in 1991. Ed Hershman was also president of Indiana Electronic Associates, a



Beginning about 1940, carrier current radio station WVTI operated on 600 kHz with a carrier power of 5 W and served as training for future broadcast announcers. The station was equipped with a Gates professional mixing console and two Gates turntables. Continuous programming stretched from 5:30 PM to 9:00 PM, Monday through Thursday. Staff at WVTI worked closely with the staff of Valparaiso University radio station WVUR to share announcers and technical information.

holding company whose main asset was the Indianapolis Electronic School on North Washington in Indianapolis.

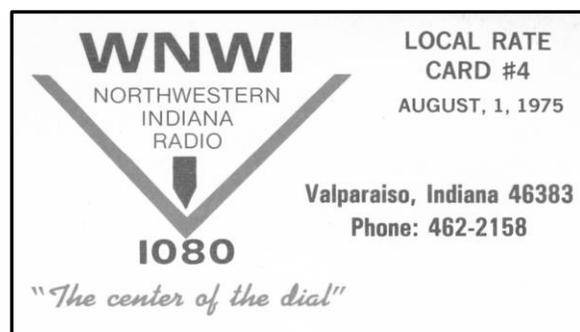
1962 Jack Gray documented, wrote, and produced *The Crosley Story*, which received national recognition.

Indianapolis Electronic School closed in 1962 from insufficient enrollment. At the end, Mrs. Peaslee watched over the business office with her customary attention to detail; class instruction was provided by Major Henricks (a 1956 graduate of Lee de Forest Technical Institute), the last instructor at IES. Mrs. Peaslee retired. Henricks continued at IES long enough to supervise several assistants, including Eugene Bullis, in the dismantling and packing of IES equipment, in preparation for being transported to VTI. Among the several unique IES items were the Farnsworth Image Dissector, RCA Iconoscope, eight-foot bread-board TV, and several glass-door book cabinets. Henricks transferred to VTI, as a part-time instructor and student, and he recalls assisting Bullis in roof repair for Hershman Hall (aka the roller rink). Henricks started at IES in 1961 and resigned from VTI in 1963, going back to work in industry; from 1968 to 1981, Henricks worked at United Electronics Institute in Louisville, Kentucky. Over a period of several years, he donated to the VTI Museum three antique radios, the orange six-foot wooden slide rule, and Sams Photofacts Numbers 1 through 200 from his personal collection. During the 1970s, the former IES Building was razed to provide space for a parking lot.



Valpo Tech's ham radio station, W9SAL, beginning about 1935 is shown as equipped in 1969.

1965 Edward Hershman received from the FCC a license to operate a 250 W AM daytime broadcast station under the call sign WNWI on 1080 kHz in Valparaiso. The license did not require the station to locate on campus. During the fall of 1965, Hershman, along with his uncle, Emmett Mellenthin, and his cousin, Gene Mellenthin, built the station on VTI grounds.



Shown is the top section from the WNWI Rate Card from 1975.

When Dr. Hershman applied for the license in 1947, he did not predict an 18-year delay. The application asked for clear channel operation on 1080 KHz (the center of the dial). Unfortunately, in an effort to sort out daytime versus nighttime propagation issues, the FCC froze clear channel applications from 1948 until 1958. Then litigation over allocation of the 1080 KHz channel lasted until 1965.

Faculty member Donald Eugene "Gene" Wiggins designed and built the 250W transmitter from the ground up, becoming the chief engineer for the station that began on-air

operations December 31, 1965. The extra workload caused by this assignment to a private for-profit corporation did not result in increased compensation for Wiggins.

1969 Rated as the only place in Indiana worth visiting “for the sake of science” by *Popular Science Magazine* in May 1988, the Wilbur H. Cummings Museum of Electronics opened in 1969. The museum was the only Indiana site among top science and technology attractions in the United States listed by the magazine. The collection drew tourists from as far as Tokyo to view first generation IBM computers, Jazz Age crystal radios, and even a working Edison talking machine.

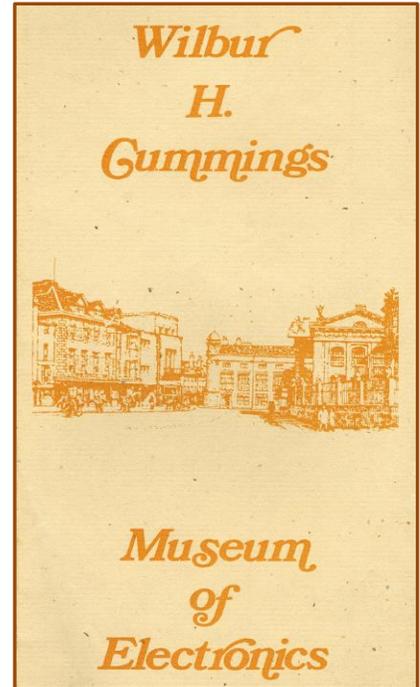
After the school closed in 1990, the collection deteriorated and disappeared, both from a leaking roof in Hershman Hall and from theft. The Alumni Association worked in 1992 to move items to Dodge Hall and Ed Hershman’s garage. The most valuable items were squirreled away in a rural Porter County shed. Other items were sold to produce revenue for the alumni association. Former VTI math instructor Frank Cezus commented, “There was a lot of beautiful stuff in there.”

1971 Noel Moss, class of 1972, received 36 votes during his candidacy for the Mayor of Valparaiso in May 1971. Citizens selected Elden Kuehl with a count of 512 votes.

1975 Microsoft emerged.

1977 The Commodore PET and Apple II personal computer entered the market place.

1980s As the 1980s unfolded, the school’s financial health deteriorated. Contributions to support the school were not attractive because the for-profit status made such contributions not tax deductible. Coupled with the continuing policy of trying to remain a profitable business was the lack of any promotional effort for the school. During the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, minimal advertising appeared in the leading technical magazines. Prospective students became aware of the school’s existence through small one-inch ads in such magazines as *Popular Mechanics*, *Radio Electronics*, and other technical magazines that were likely to be read by high school students.



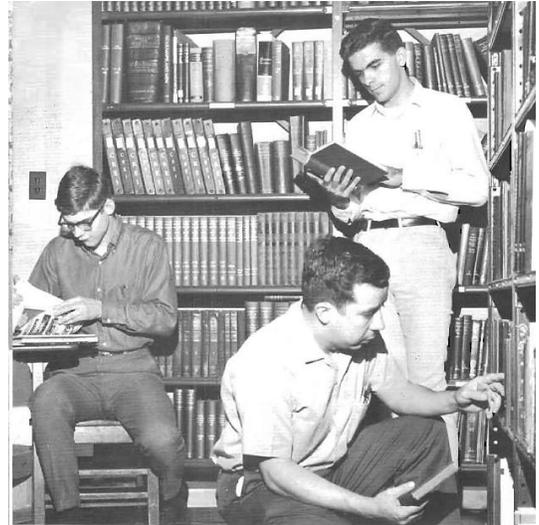
The Wilbur H. Cummings Museum of Electronics was one of two Indiana museums featured in the book, *America on Display*, published in 1987 by Facts on File.



Small as they were, these ads were somewhat effective with high school graduates by advertising what Northwest Indiana was hiding. One prominent educator with Indiana’s largest university remarked, “Valparaiso Technical Institute is the best kept secret in the

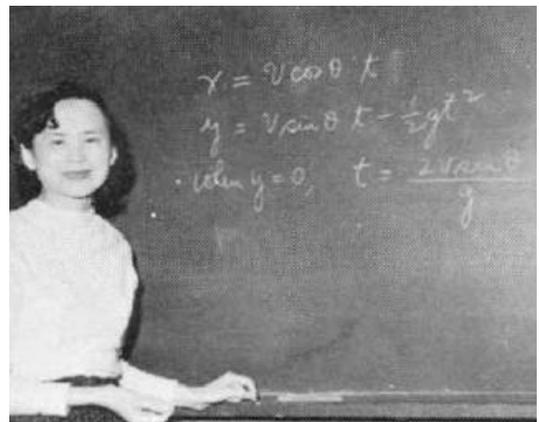
Midwest." VTI's excellence notwithstanding, competing schools became more aggressive with advertising, and, despite VTI's reputation among employers across the country, enrollment dwindled. The small ads no longer hooked high school students contemplating careers.

Valparaiso Technical Institute's financial problems persisted partly because of the school's for-profit tax status. If the school converted to a nonprofit status, the tax code required an institution of this stature to hire teachers with a minimum of a master's degree. Since instructors at VTI did not possess such a degree, the conversion to nonprofit status would have caused the loss of most teachers, thus closing the school. In addition, VTI always believed the school should operate on a for-profit basis—on the theory that it should always *pay its own way*, without grants or subsidies. In its earlier years, this did not significantly affect the school, but, later on, this proprietary position restrained school officials from obtaining and offering loan programs, which became almost a necessity for average students. Many families could not send their children to obtain any advanced learning without participating in a loan or grant program.



Located in Dodge Hall on Lincolnway, the library featured reference journals and periodicals along with numerous books donated by industry.

Enrollment woes and financial headaches vanished during the Vietnam War of the 1960s and 70s. Enrollment jumped to an all-time high. No sooner did the war wind down than the next generation of potential students, freed from the draft, chose to forgo the opportunity to study at VTI. Enrollment sagged again, as students and their parents selected schools that took advantage of the many government financial aid programs offered by nonprofit schools.



Math instructor Mrs. Florence Shao is pictured in the 1958–1959 *Valtechnian*.

Throughout the U.S., 1.8 million students annually enrolled in private career technical schools that lasted from a few months to a few years, with annual tuition averaging \$2,500 and most schools offering financial aid.

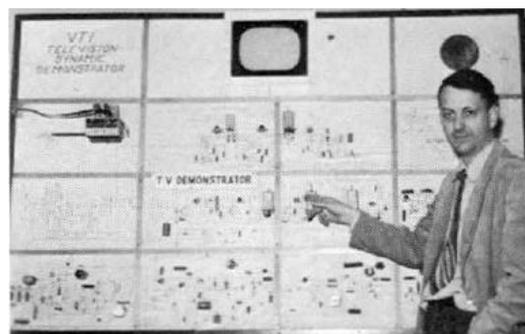
Neglect of the physical premises became evident even to casual visitors, and decay of the facilities presented a real hardship to the students. Prospective students visiting the campus often rejected the school because of the deteriorating facilities. To retain instructors was becoming difficult (although the overall loyalty of the teachers remained

impressive) as the lure of better salaries and conditions from the very industries that were hiring their students pulled them from their academic offices.

In the early 1980s, enormous cash flow problems caused school officials to stop sending in their tax payments to state and federal agencies, just to meet day-to-day expenses. Although deducted regularly from employee paychecks, unpaid federal and state taxes caused instructors to make up that amount from their personal money.

Further, the City of Valparaiso significantly raised taxes, and, with declining enrolment, the financial situation continued its downward slide; the school defaulted on its loan payments to the bank. Clearly, a crisis condition existed. Overall, the morale of the staff and students was at an all-time low.

1980s Computer-based products, particularly microprocessor items, flooded the market place. IBM's PC and MS-DOS 1981, as well as a fledgling Internet, foretold world-changing events as early as 1983. Windows operating system appeared in 1985, 3-D video games in 1987, Doppler radar in 1988, AOL and HDTV in 1989.



1988 "Houston, we had a problem" was misquoted from the Apollo 13 moon flight, to report a major technical problem back to their Houston base, into "Houston, we have a problem."

In this classroom photo can be seen A. Russell Knudsen at the VTI Television Dynamic Demonstrator Board, which proved to be an effective teaching aid.

Such ominous words echoed the fate of VTI. Valparaiso Technical Institute filed for bankruptcy May 2, 1988. VTI was over \$375,000 in debt. Pressures from creditors (Internal Revenue Service, the Electric Utility NIPSCO, and the North Central Bank) took their toll, and the decision to seek Chapter 11 bankruptcy became necessary.

Enrollment declined from a 1980s high of 274 to 50 by 1989. By 1986, teachers began to leave. Most instructors had not received pay. Without money for payroll or health insurance, and facing an empty retirement fund, instructors had only one choice: departure. Six dedicated instructors remained for the last couple of years until they left in 1989.

1989 With fewer than 35 students in the last semester, the school attempted to sell a sizable chunk of its campus. On the block was 17,500-square-foot Dodge Hall and 13,000-square-foot Memorial Hall at a total price of \$300 K. The buildings never sold for that amount.

1990 In their last semester, students from 1989 found themselves without graduation and with no prospect to complete their degrees because the instructors had left. A long-time teacher and school administrator, R. Clويد Patton, asked the Valpo Tech Alumni Association to assist last-semester students to obtain their degrees. The VTAA took over tuition money and hired enough teachers to complete the last semester, with graduation following in January 1991. Art Hershman worked to have credits accepted at Ivy Tech for the remaining students desiring a transfer.

To prevent unauthorized references to VTI, and because a competing school was attempting to use the VTI name, the VTAA acquired the name Valparaiso Technical Institute from Ed Hershman. To assure student records were not lost or destroyed from the leaking roof in Hershman Hall, the VTAA acquired those records from school officials in an arrangement with the State of Indiana's Proprietary School Division of the Secretary of State's office. R. Clويد Patton received an appointment as dean of education to fulfill transcript requests legally.

The VTAA's immediate goal was not reopening VTI. It was felt that a more important fivefold mission must be acted upon, including

1. A home for the alumni association, its records, and transcripts.
2. A location for the Wilbur Cummings Museum of Electronics.
3. A project to help hold the association together.
4. A platform for the reorganization of Valparaiso Technical Institute.
5. Real assets for the association.

School officials, the faculty, the students, and (most importantly) the alumni association all believed that Valpo Tech was too important an entity to let die. The buildings were not worth saving by themselves, and the fixtures weren't worth the trouble; however, everyone wanted to save the heritage and the concept, as the first school in the world to teach radio *wireless* and over 117 years of teaching state-of-the-art electronics to more than 8,000 students. Graduates became teachers, began their own businesses, and served as important technicians, engineers, and executives of broadcast stations, communications networks,

THE HUT
 Located On Campus of Valparaiso Technical Institute
 Will Serve
COUNTRY STYLED CHICKEN DINNERS
Friday, July 4
For \$1.25 Each

All the Chicken You Can Eat and All That Goes With It — Served in Dishes On Your Table.

We Will Serve the Public From
12 NOON to 6 P. M.

Please Call 1164R For Reservation and Be Sure of Good Hot Food

Will Have Waitresses To Serve You
Regular Cafeteria Dinners, 75c

Vidette Messenger July 2, 1947



and manufacturing companies. The entire country had an interest in making sure an original idea, started and maintained in the heartland of the Midwest, did not disappear. After all, there is only one *original* of anything!

With a desire to reopen the school, but desiring a fresh start, the VTAA acted quickly to register the name "Valparaiso Institute of Technology, Inc." The name became active on December 19, 1990, as an Indiana Non-Profit Domestic Corporation, listing Paul K. Brubaker, Sr., as president and Bryant Mitol as secretary, with a registration address of 1150 West Lincolnway, Valparaiso, Indiana 46383. The name remains active today, thanks to Paul Brubaker.

Expecting to reopen the school, the VTAA established a board of trustees. The board was comprised of the following: the mayor of Valparaiso, David Butterfield; the city building commissioner, Dr. John B. Morland, who once was the superintendent of schools in Valparaiso and the president of Lakeland College near Sheboygan, Wisconsin; R. C. Patton, who has been at Valpo Tech for over 50 years, most of them as Dean of Education; Ronald Nelson, an attorney in Valparaiso; Alfred Bourdelais, past president of IVY Tech; and three alumni from the alumni board of directors, including Bryant Mitol, Tom Whitcomb, and Paul K. Brubaker, Sr.

1990s The online information age begins with Amazon, Yahoo, the World Wide Web, Internet protocol HTTP, and HTML emerging in 1994. The next year, eBay begins, followed by Travelocity in 1996 and Google in 1998.

1991 Valparaiso Technical Institute dissolved in April of 1991, ending 117 years of operation.

1992 According to VTI's attorney, Brian J. Hurley, the final bankruptcy proceedings would have caused half the 15-acre campus to become a tax sale on Wednesday, February 16, 1992, but, on Monday, February 14, 1992, several people quickly stepped in to purchase the buildings and property.



FACING DEMOLITION
The roof collapsed on the remains in J. B. Hershman Hall, abandoned since 1991. Photo by Michael Gard, The Times

The VTAA bought Dodge Hall and some adjoining property at a cost of \$50K. This payment included about \$20K pledge money from alumni. On May 19, 1992, Dodge Hall, the parking lot surrounding it, and the rights to Valparaiso Technical Institute became the official possession of The Valpo Tech Alumni Association.

1995 The VTAA's goal was to complete the acquisition of the remaining VTI property and to reopen Valpo Tech, raising it to greater levels of accomplishment than ever before. After studying the task ahead, the VTAA set a target of \$2 million. Donations were sought from alumni and the electronic industries that depended on the high-tech skills and talents of its graduates.

The VTAA Board formed a steering committee consisting of Tom Whitcomb, Bryant Mitol, John Davis, and Paul Brubaker, Sr., to implement, coordinate, and expedite the alumni board's work instead of waiting until the board could communicate with all the people who might or might not be interested.

The mayor of Valparaiso, a member of the board for Valparaiso Institute of Technology, attempted to get state senators and representatives together with the board of trustees for VIT to find a way to reopen the school. The effort was unsuccessful.

Out of money, the VTAA was about to file bankruptcy. A day before the VTAA bankruptcy hearing in 1995, which would have again resulted in Dodge Hall and its surroundings selling at auction for a tax sale and the ultimate wrecking ball, the VTAA hurriedly sold its property to a private individual. The VTAA was to have permanent access to the VTI Library, but, unfortunately, a legal mistake by the bankruptcy attorneys caused the contents to go with the building to the new owners.

1997 Hershman Hall was in major disrepair suffering from deteriorating walls and a collapsed roof. In 1997, the City of Valparaiso characterized Hershman Hall as a threat to public health and obtained a demolition order against the property.

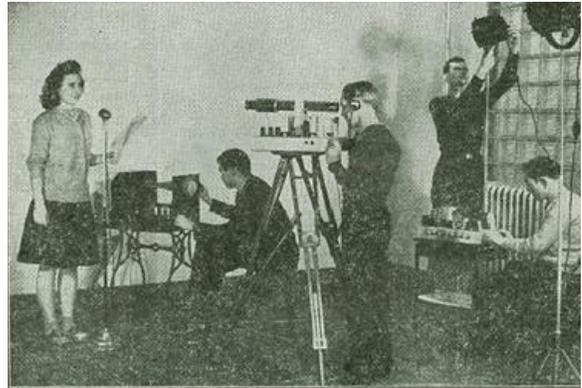
Mike Gromer of GM Regional Development purchased Hershman Hall and the three-acre site surrounding it in early 1999. He planned for a park at the site. Demolition soon followed.

Truckloads of antiques from Hershman Hall were transferred to various museums as Ed Hershman's basement and carport were already full to capacity. Several items left by vandals and others that were marketable were sold to pay back taxes of \$28,758.



Others purchased Steinmetz Hall and Ennis Hall for conversion into apartments.

The VTAA collected voluntary dues that were used to provide student loans. Many students were able to complete their education because of this service. After the collapse of VTI, the VTAA worked to ensure repayment for all loans. Then, after discovering pilfering of the fund by school officials, the VTAA took over the management of the money.



Pictured is one of the student television labs in Dodge Hall.

In summary: Not wishing this once prestigious school to fail, the VTAA attempted the impossible. Valiantly, they tried to reopen the school. Ahead was the costly task to refurbish Dodge Hall after decades of serious neglect. A few of the hurdles that were cleared were replacing the million BTU boiler with seven gas furnaces, a new roof, new paint inside and out, insulation (for the first time ever), thermal windows, new hallway carpeting, and an updated and upgraded electrical service.

Sadly, after spending in excess of \$60 K to make necessary repairs and upgrades to the building, the VTAA watched funds dwindle and had to confront the reality that the school would never reopen.

Dodge Hall remained under private ownership until 2011, when, as before, a day prior to the filing for bankruptcy by the building's owner, Dodge Hall avoided the wrecking ball. Walter Breiteringer and two investment partners quickly stepped in to purchase the building, preventing its destruction. Their intent was not to own the building for a long time but to rehab enough of the building for a future sale. That effort remains underway today.

Perhaps it comes as no surprise that the alumni association would attempt to restart its school. After all, the hi-tech industry was accustomed to lightning-fast analyses, brilliant innovations, and dazzling solutions that naysayers proclaimed impossible. To our knowledge, this had never been attempted before. Looking back, we are forced to admit that saving a school required a king's ransom. The VTAA lacked such treasure. Conservative estimates put the figure at several million dollars to have rehabbed the buildings, classrooms, and equipment.



Pictured is a typical example of the task ahead for clearing out Dodge Hall in 2014.

Alums often wondered what was going on with the school. Expectations were probably not the same for everyone. Those in or near Valparaiso watched the privately held school crumble—both literally and figuratively—in the 1980s. Efforts to mitigate that condition were paramount in the minds of Valparaiso-based alums. Those furthest from Valparaiso could not have known about the collapse; they expected newsletters and homecomings to continue indefinitely.



This view of the VTI campus is likely from the late 1960s or early 1970s.

Communication was a challenge for the limited staff of the VTAA. The demise occurred at a time when few people owned PCs. Few had email; none had social media. The newsletter (*Val-Tech News*), at a cost of \$1,500 per mailing, was the only vehicle to provide alums with information. Because graduates were busy with their careers and updates were not always forthcoming, the mailing list aged inexorably.

In their 1982 book entitled *In Search of Excellence*, Tom Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., expertly describe the importance of staying with the business you know. From Powel Crosley's success in building a radio empire to the achievements of The Voice of America, radio was in its heyday in 1947. Bill Putnam's success was sweeping the recording industry. The decision by Dr. Hershman to build a radio station in 1947 as a way to expand and upgrade his school may appear to have been a diversion from the core business, but, indeed, Hershman's idea was outstanding. In a stark turn of fate, the license was delayed beyond the window of opportunity to be a viable funding source for the school, thanks to muddled politics and litigation.

Eighteen years later (1965) was not a good time to allocate funds for a radio station as the school required financial attention, particularly when overhead costs for technology were skyrocketing. The campus was aging while laboratory equipment required maintenance and upgrading. An all-time high enrollment during the 1960s and 70s (caused in large part by the Vietnam War) masked the eroding financial and physical conditions.

Over the course of their careers, many alums have witnessed their corporations going astray, losing their core focus, and faltering. Such was the case for this privately held

technical school. Failing to take decisive action to bolster its financial condition during the strategic decade of the 1960s was a fatal mistake. While many electronic schools enjoyed success during the massive changes in technology in the 1980s, VTI was not among them.

Rather than convert to a nonprofit tax status and hiring teachers with a master's degree, that would have allowed the acceptance of federally funded student aid assistance, which would have allowed the government to intervene in the curriculum, VTI drifted into bankruptcy in 1988. Over its 117-year existence, the school closed four times and reopened three times. It could not muster a fourth reopening.

Beginning about 2012 and lasting well into 2015, a group of VTI graduates and friends donated a large amount of personal time, effort, and money to recover school records, artifacts, equipment, and memorabilia from Dodge Hall. Most of the recovered items remain in storage supplemented by former students. As Dodge Hall continued to deteriorate, these same volunteers worked to repair floors and to address other structural issues so that at least one building could be saved.

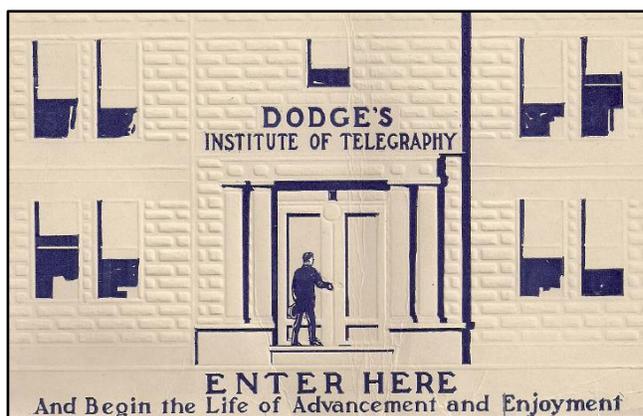
With the clarity of hindsight, we observe VTI riding on the momentum of the postwar years into a barely detectable descent in the late 1970s. The exponential development of Silicon Valley and the inevitable competition from well-endowed universities dealt the ethereal deathblow. VTI could not upgrade and had nowhere to turn.

Thousands of graduates (estimated at about 8,000) obtained an outstanding education from DIT and VTI providing the framework for rewarding careers. You will find successful VTI alums scattered around the United States, Canada and the rest of the world in nearly every electronics business imaginable. Sony Corporation made an offer to every student from the last graduating class in 1991 and, without the assurance that there would ever be another VTI group of graduates, guaranteed to hire every graduate from the next class.

Understandably, graduates from VTI are disappointed that the school failed to overcome its obstacles, but many are comforted in knowing the name Valparaiso Technical Institute has endured along with Dodge Hall, student records, and a variety of salvaged artifacts.

One of the reasons Dodge's Institute of Telegraphy and Valparaiso Technical Institute became so popular with students and industry was the willingness to offer courses relevant to the technologies that were emerging when the students enrolled. Graduating and entering the electronics

world with specific technical training was a tradition formed early with Dodge's Institute of Telegraphy in 1873. Graduates were always able to find a multitude of jobs. Today,



G. M. Dodge understood well the importance of setting expectations and expecting success.

industry makes more job offers for Valpo Tech graduates than there are graduates to fill them.

Alums, including me, are proud to have graduated from this amazing institution, the oldest and one of the most prestigious electronic schools in the nation.

By Leland L. Hite
VTI Class of 1966
May 25, 2015

I sincerely thank the many graduates and friends of VTI for their contribution to this story.

Sources:

Unless otherwise noted, images are from the Valparaiso Technical Institute archives.

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I thank [Dr. Robert T. Rhode](#), originally from Pine Village, Indiana, for his help in editing this document. Check his site where you will find many fascinating books and eBooks, as well as several free documents to enjoy, including original sumi-e art.

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By vote of the Faculty and with the consent of the Board of Directors
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who has completed the courses required for the degree named and has complied with all
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Bachelor of Science in Electronic Engineering

In Witness Whereof this diploma is sealed with the official seal of the Institute and signed by
 the president of the Institute and the secretary of the board

Dated this *28th* day of *January* 1946



J. Edward Herschman President
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