

CHAPTER 2

1920-1930



El Paso's population nearly doubled between 1910 and 1920, when the count reached 77,560. Enrollment at the school on the hill had also increased, from the twenty-seven in 1914 to 138 in 1919. It was to remain just over or under one hundred until late in the decade, when the El Paso Junior College merged with the College of Mines.

The status of the mining school was changed by legislation in 1919, when it was made a branch of The University of Texas, called the Department of Mines and Metallurgy. The Board of Regents adjusted the name again for the 1920-21 catalog, which read "College of Mines and Metallurgy, El Paso."

These changes inspired student debate over the proper colors for the school—whether they should continue to be orange and white. The answer, after a student body meeting, was yes.

Student government was slowly making progress. The Students' Association had been started in 1919 with John Savage as its first president. He was joined by Ralston Cooper and others in arguing in favor of retaining the school colors. Student opinion and activities were publicized in the *Prospector*, which was evolving from a magazine format to a genuine purveyor of campus news. In 1922 it was joined by another student publication, the *Flow Sheet* (later spelled as one word), a sixty-four-page yearbook. The previous year, the college had been represented in a section of the main university's yearbook, the *Cactus*.

With growth came the need for new facilities. The regents provided fifteen thousand dollars for the construction of Kelly Hall, named for C. E. Kelly, who served on the Board of Regents from 1917-1923 and was a former mayor of El Paso. Cap Kidd was pushing for an athletic field, and funds were made available to start developing what eventually became Kidd Field.

The oldest continuous student tradition, the observance of St. Patrick's Day, was first reported in the *Prospector* for March 1920. This was an initiation

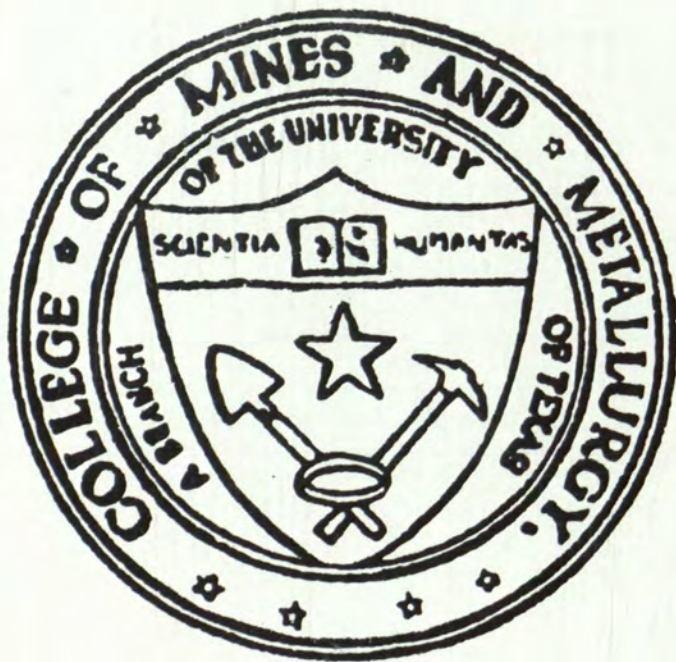
ceremony for freshmen, presided over by an upperclassman wearing a long robe, a bishop's mitre made of cardboard, and a white cotton beard. Over the years, the location has changed from a picnic spot beside the Rio Grande, in 1920, to the abandoned tin mine on the east side of the Franklins (where the explosion of five hundred pounds of dynamite in 1922 attracted a film crew from International News Service and publicity for the college in movie theater newscasts nationwide), to abandoned mines at Oro Grande, New Mexico, and in recent years to the campus area (with a later picnic elsewhere). Basically, the initiates are blindfolded, and after some high jinx are asked to kiss the Blarney Stone, which is doused with green paint, and then to shake hands with St. Pat, whose hand is a wet paint brush. The ceremonies have varied since 1920, especially with the increase in women engineering students, but the spirit remains the same.

Yet another tradition was drummed up by students in less than two days of December 1923 when they

assembled brooms, buckets, and whitewash to paint a huge "M" on Mount Franklin during an unofficial holiday. The most enjoyable part of the action, according to the *Prospector* report of December 15, was the arrival of girls "with large boxes and cans of chow."

The letter measured 150 square feet. To reach the site, students traveled along Scenic Drive, which had been built in 1920 but was not to be paved until 1933. Then, as in later years, they parked on the drive and walked up the steep mountainside, carrying the tools necessary for their whitewash job. The "M" Club, a group of lettermen in sports, took up the painting project in 1924. It became an annual event for freshmen, who in some years wore orange and white beanies. The work would be followed by a bean feed on the tennis courts or at some other campus location.

In later years several local high schools also painted letters on the mountain. Some would illuminate the outlines on the nights of major football games.



The seal of the College of Mines and Metallurgy featured a pick and spade with a miner's pan and the identification "A Branch of the University of Texas." At each side of an open book are the words "Scientia" and "Humanitas." This continued to be the seal until the 1949 name change to Texas Western College.



John J. O'Keeffe, in NOVA of September 1980, recalled his days as editor of The Prospector in 1919-20. The student publication started in 1915 and used a magazine format until O'Keeffe became editor, when it became a newspaper. It continues in 1988 as a twice-weekly newspaper.



Members of the M Club, lettermen in athletics, in 1924-25 were pictured in the 1925 Flow Sheet and names, some incomplete, were listed thus: R. A. Patterson, D. Outlaw, B. Smith, J. A. Nix, A. Smith, O. Caples, D. C. Cooney, R. Gnauck, J. Waugh, W. Daehne, L. Green, H. Ward, Ketchersid, T. J. Woodside, H. V. Olsen, T. L. White, R. Canon, A. Evans, R. Rhew, S. D. Hendricks, T. B. Johnson,

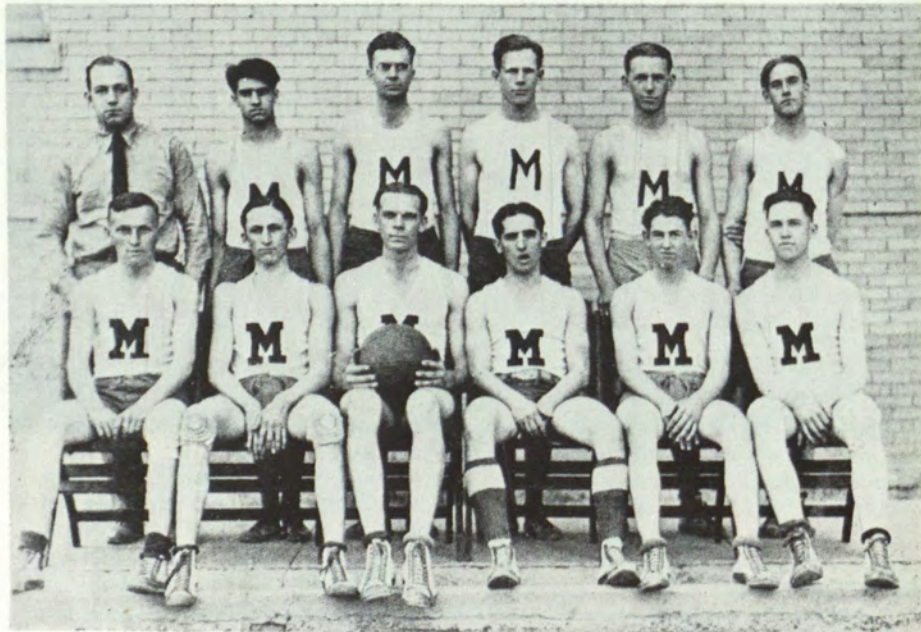
Bill Binford, Bob Binford, L. Robinson, Harry McKemy, "Chile" McKemy, "Ya" McKemy, G. Ragsdale, T. H. Haynie, C. Pollock, B. Finch, Jensen, J. McCormick, B. C. Morgan, J. C. Holford, O. H. Maude, J. Nelson, H. Brown, Jack Light, B. L. Coffey, J. Vowell, G. Magruder, Russell Worthington, "Cap" Kidd, Mr. Binford, and Tommy Dwyer.

The 1921 campus had these five buildings plus the mill at far left. From left are the Power House, now part of the Geology Building; the Chemistry Building, now renamed Quinn Hall to honor Howard E. Quinn, professor of geology from 1924-1965; Main Building, now Old Main; Kelly Hall, named for a former mayor of El Paso who served on The University of Texas Board of Regents from 1917-1923; and Burges Hall, named for Richard Burges, state representative from El Paso who was instrumental in the creation of the School of Mines in 1913. The Kelly and Burges names were later transferred to dormitories, the former built in 1970 and the latter in 1963. The original Kelly Hall was called Mass Communication Building until that department moved out in 1979; it was for a while called Old Kelly, then in 1986 was renamed Vowell Hall to honor Jack C. Vowell, former football coach and longtime friend of the university. Burges was called Education Building until the completion in 1971 of the adjacent building of that name, then was renamed to honor John F. Graham, metallurgy professor from 1925-1955.



Members of the 1922-23 basketball squad, pictured in the Flow Sheet, were identified only by last names and not according to where they appeared in the photo. They were Jensen, Woodside, Johnson, Holford, Ragsdale, Springer, and Cordova. Miner basketball teams struggled for wins in the early years; this team won only one out of seven games, but it was a victory over New Mexico A&M.

The 1923-24 basketball squad was handicapped by the lack of a gymnasium and had to play many of its games on outdoor courts, according to the 1924 Flow Sheet. Their opponents included the University of Texas and Sul Ross. Jack Vowell doubled as coach for basketball and football.





The El Paso Women's Association to the College of Mines, also known as the Sponsors' Club, was pictured in the 1924 Flow Sheet, which described them as the most prominent women in town. They were not identified for the photo but were listed:

Mrs. A. P. Averill, president; Mrs. Robert McAfee, Mrs. A. P. Coles, and Mrs. J. F. Williams, vice presidents; Mrs. James A. Pickett, secretary; Mrs. Maurice Schwartz, treasurer; Mrs. John W. Kidd, Mrs. C. E. Kelly, Mrs. W. R. Brown, Mrs. B. L. Farrar, Mrs. F. H. Seamon, Mrs. Will T. Owen, and Mrs. Kuno Doerr, board members.

Coach Jack Vowell led the Miner football team in its first winning season, 1922, with five wins and four losses. In 1923 they did not fare quite that well, winning three and losing four games, but did manage to defeat two Army teams and Sul Ross. Vowell also coached basketball in 1923-24, when the three wins out of thirteen games included one over New Mexico A&M (now New Mexico State).



Junior College

El Pasoans have a long-standing interest in higher education for their sons and daughters. The first El Paso High School, built in 1902, had an inscription in Latin in the auditorium: "Hoc ex ludo ad universitatem Texanum itur" (From this school one goes to The University of Texas). Coincidentally, the former high school site was occupied during the 1960s and early 1970s by a nursing school which in 1976 became a college of The University of Texas at El Paso.

One of the chief promoters of a local college was A. H. Hughey, who achieved an impressive career as superintendent of schools from 1919 until 1951. When the high school moved to its present location in 1916, someone—probably Hughey—encouraged an editorial in the student newspaper proposing that part of that grand new building be used to house a junior college. Although the new School of Mines was a college, it offered only limited studies and was outside the city limits, east of Fort Bliss.

Arguments in favor of the junior college were El Paso's geographic isolation, hundreds of miles from any state institutions where, for example, teacher training was available; the expense of going away to school; and the increasing number of potential college students in the community.

Hughey, who had a gift for pulling strings and achieving far-sighted goals, was authorized by the El Paso Board of Education in July 1920 to "look into the feasibility of setting up a junior college, because the School of Mines was specialized." The board budgeted \$15,000 for the endeavor.

In the fall of 1920 (the same year the Sul Ross normal school opened in Alpine), the El Paso Junior College opened as the first junior college in Texas. About a dozen other municipal/school district junior colleges were founded in the state during the twenties.

The college used the fourth floor of El Paso High School, sharing the library, the laboratories, and some faculty members with the high school. John W. "Cap" Kidd of the Mines faculty taught mathematics there for the 1921 summer session.

The first president of the junior college was Dr. Frank H. H. Roberts, a native of Ohio and former president of the New Mexico Normal University at Las Vegas. He had earned two bachelor's degrees from Ohio University, a master's from Kenyon College, and two doctorates from Denver University. As his academic record might indicate, he was a highly regarded scholar and contributed greatly to anthropological research in the Southwest. He headed the college during most of its existence.

Although the college's courses were not competitive with those of the College of Mines, the two did become rivals on the football field. Their first game was played November 15, 1924, at Rio Grande Park, just north and west of the Southern Pacific shops near Five Points. The junior college yearbook, the *Sandstorm*, observed: "Junior College lost no prestige in being humbled by a team but 15 points weaker than the Arizona University by comparative scores. . . . Beaten by four touchdowns, the Panther cherishes the same respect and revenge for the Miner that the [El Paso High] Tiger of last year had for the Phoenix Coyote. . . . Roar it out, Panthers!"

Long before the enrollment peaked in 1924, the junior college became the target of objections, focused mainly on financing. The college was operated by the school district, some of whose patrons felt the money could be better spent on elementary schools.

The University of Texas Board of Regents met in El Paso in January 1923 and brought up the possibility of merging the two schools, but took no action since a legislative act was required to change the status of the state school.

The discussion continued, with some critics calling for the College of Mines to close, others for the junior college to close, and some still favoring a merger.

Dr. Roberts resigned the presidency in 1926, during a period when rumors about the closing of the mining school proliferated. El Pasoans, through the Chamber of Commerce's Mines committee and other resources, emphasized the importance to the city of a branch of The University of Texas, as opposed to a locally-run junior college.

The first winning season for a Miner football team was achieved by this 1922 team, coached by Jack C. Vowell. They won five and lost four games, defeating El Paso

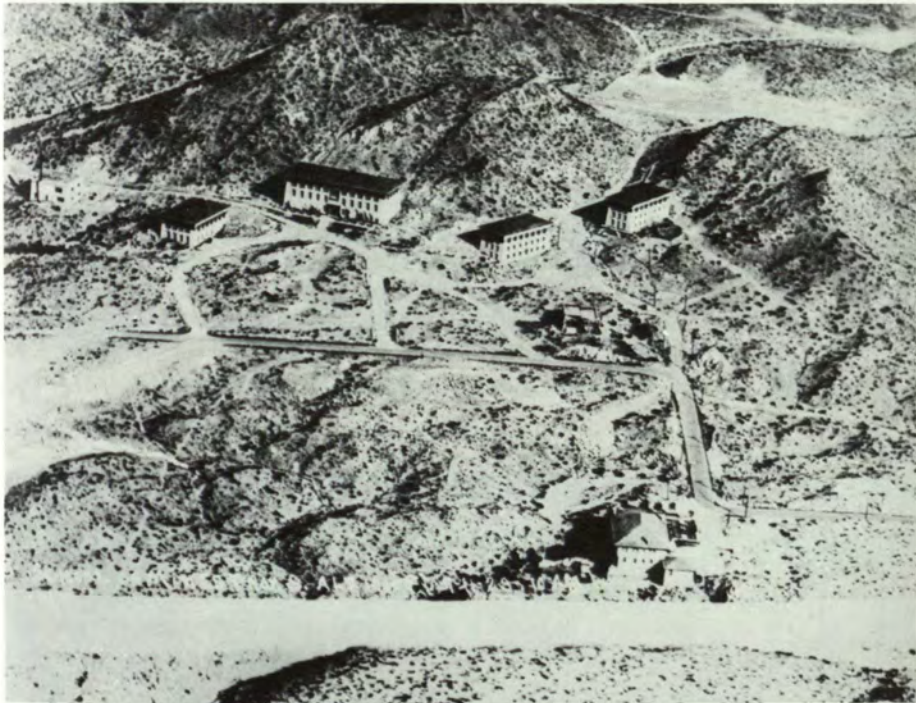
Junior College 58-0 and New Mexico Military Institute 12-0. Dean Stephen Worrell is in the third row far left, with John W. Kidd next to him.



Dean and Mrs. S. H. Worrell built this house south of the campus, below Kelly Hall, in 1921. They lived there until 1923, when they left El Paso, and deeded the house to the college. It was the residence of Dean John W. "Cap" Kidd and other administrators until 1960. At that time it was known as the Smith House because

A. A. Smith, business manager and 1954-55 acting president, and his family lived there. As the Special Projects Center, the building has housed ballet classes, the Schellenger Laboratories, the Upward Bound program, and various other specialized services.

This 1923 aerial photo of the campus shows the earliest buildings—from the left are the mill, the power house, Chemistry, Main, Kelly, and Burges. The small house near the center was built by Dean and Mrs. Worrell and served as the home of administrators for many years. Below is



the home of V. E. Ware, the contractor who built the earliest structures on campus and was one of the donors of the land for it. Ware's house became the home of presidents of the college until 1960 when it was razed for construction of the Liberal Arts Building.

ENROLLMENT AT EL PASO JUNIOR COLLEGE

Year	Long Session	Summer Session	Graduates
1920-21	18	27	
1921-22	106	69	11
1922-23	401	96	15
1923-24	401	176	26
1924-25	506	150	35
1925-26	473	*	46
1926-27	467	140	53

* Not available

Finally, early in 1927, the announcement was made that the College of Mines could add courses for which there was sufficient demand. The El Paso School Board voted approval of the proposed merger of the two, on condition that the legislature would increase the funding for the College of Mines. The pleas of El Pasoans were heard in Austin; the budget was increased substantially. Local supporters added money toward the salary of a new dean. The junior college closed after the May 1927 commencement.

The El Paso school system continued to provide teachers through 1931 for the academic courses formerly offered at the junior college, and continued to subsidize the college in 1931-32 and 1932-33 in order that the former two-year program might be expanded to sustain a four-year baccalaureate.

Among the early faculty members of the junior college who moved to the Mines faculty were W. W. Lake, chemistry professor, who remained from 1927 to 1945; Mrs. Abbie Durkee, 1927 to 1930; Alvin E. Null, 1927 to 1940; W. A. Stigler, 1927 to 1929; Evaline Harrington, 1927 to 1929; Calhoun Harris, 1930 to 1932; and Nell Smith, 1928 to 1929.

Several student organizations also made the move, among them Pi Epsilon Phi, women's social group, and Sigma Phi Omega for men. When a drama group was organized at Mines by Mrs. Myrtle Ball, it retained the name of its junior college predecessor: College Players.

As a result of the merger, Texas Mines in 1927 offered two years of academic work recognized by colleges of grade A standing as well as technical courses in mining engineering and associated subjects.

As the decade of the twenties progressed, El Paso experienced a period of depression and some population decline. A Rio Grande flood in 1925 left hundreds homeless and damaged buildings and crops extensively. Smelter-town, the village down the hill from the college, was abandoned. Work began on flood control measures to prevent a recurrence of the disaster.

As reflected in the yearbooks after the combining of the two colleges, their traditions were enriched. The St. Patrick's Day picnic continued as an engineers' activity, with the associated Hard Luck Dance sponsored by the Scientific Club: The Woman's Association sponsored a new kind of dance at that same season in 1929, with the women students inviting their own dates—a departure from custom.

Student organizations during the late twenties included Omega Phi Delta, dating from 1925; Pi Epsilon Pi and Sigma Phi Omega social groups, the latter two founded at the junior college; the Latin American Club, reorganized in 1927 from the Asociacion de Estudiantes de Ingenieria; the Woman's Association; the Mines Band, organized in 1927 and directed by Rayo Reyes, a popular professional musician; the Ore Diggers, a group of men who marched at football games; Alpha Phi Omega, local men's social fraternity started in 1919; the Scientific Club, organized in 1920 and affiliated with the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers; and the Rifle Club. There were teams for football, basketball, and tennis.

Alpha Phi Omega, organized in 1919, was a local social fraternity for engineering students until 1972. In this 1924 group pictured in the Flow Sheet are, identified only by last names: (first row, from left) Daggett, Summers, Kipp, Russell, Ragsdale, Sharp; (second row) C. Smith, Thomas, Skidmore, Woodside, Temple, Bacon, and B. Smith. Thomas later became dean of engineering at the College of Mines.



The Mines Orchestra, pictured here in a 1923 Flow Sheet, was a small but zealous bunch. They performed for the March 16 dance at the Sheldon Hotel and other festive get-togethers, for which they spread out their identifying "Texas Mines" banner as a backdrop.



The Sponsors Club, later the Women's Auxiliary, a group of community women, was begun in 1924 to provide help for the college. They raised money to complete the building of the tennis courts, decorated and furnished the recreation room in the Kelly Hall dormitory, and furnished a women's lounge in Main. Their fund-raising endeavors reflected social tastes of the times, with mah-jongg parties in the twenties, bazaars in the thirties, silver teas in the forties, and style shows in the fifties.

The *Flowsheet* in 1929 started a contest for most popular male and female students as a fund-raiser for the publication. It also introduced competition for school beauties.

College humor in the twenties favored two-liners:

"Well, well, a professors' meeting."

"Yes, a little forget-together."

Just as in its early days the college had been affected by the revolution in Mexico, so it was by the Escobar Revolution of 1929 when fighting broke out in Ciudad Juarez. Jose Gonzalo Escobar led a group of regular army

officers in taking up arms against the federal government in ten of Mexico's thirty states. On March 3, the day before Herbert Hoover became president of the United States, fighting erupted in the first war in Mexico to use aviation and radio.

As Juarez, the largest border city and a major port of entry, became a target for the rebels, the U.S. military was alerted at Fort Bliss. On March 8 the attack on Juarez began. Rifle fire crossed the Rio Grande, killing a child, wounding another, and pock-marking buildings. Students from the College of Mines rushed across the river to volunteer their services as stretcher bearers.

The Fort Bliss commander, Brig. Gen. George Van Horn Moseley, went to Juarez and persuaded the rebel leader to surrender the city. The rebels retreated and the short-lived revolution ended with a truce on April 30.

While revolutionary activities across the border had influenced the relocation of the school in 1916, this time the activities in Juarez had little impact on the College of Mines. They were, however, another example of the unusual aspects of life on an international border.

The Woman's Auxiliary, organized in 1924 by faculty wives and community women interested in the college, in its first year provided money to help students complete the tennis court they started to build below Main Building. This view is from the hill above Main, showing the first of several tennis courts that occupied the site until the construction of the Biology (now Psychology) Building in 1951.



Members of the junior class were pictured in the 1922 Flow Sheet (spelled as two words then) sitting on the steps in front of Main Building. They were not identified by rows, but the class list included:

H. H. Beck, W. Binford, A. Bull, J. Cheavens, F. Dale, W. E. Dickinson, H. Donaldson, A. M. Evans, P. Hale, K. C. Hamilton, K. Hardy, W. Ingham, R. H. Maese, W. L. Miller, W. L. Mills, E. J. Mueller, R. Rhew, F. Risacher, L. Robinson, C. A. Skidmore, L. A. Summers, W. J. Tharp, A. C. Wheatley, and J. R. Yanez.



The R.F.D. Club was organized in the fall of 1923 and kept the meaning of its name a mystery. Josephine Morfit was president. The coeds raised \$140 for the athletic fund by giving a dance and ended the school year with a dance honoring the graduating seniors.



Sophomore class members, as seen in the 1924 Flow Sheet, wore sturdy boots. They were not identified in the picture, and the class list included only surnames: Kipp, president; Haynie, vice president; Price, secretary-treasurer; Alexander, Baldwin, De Witt, Johnson, Thomas, Wynn, Miss Curd, Stover, Nelson, Edmondson, Camacho, Gay, Jones, Jensen, and Miss Burnham. Thomas, the one in the white shirt, returned in 1930 to teach and served many years as dean of engineering.





The school orchestra in 1924 was strong on banjos and saxophones, popular instruments of the day. The group was pictured in the 1924 Flow Sheet.



Taking part in a geology field trip in the fall of 1924 was a group of students and faculty members pictured in the 1925 Flowsheet. Seated on the ground is Fred Price. In chairs, from left, are W. H. Seamon, Cleve Stover, an unidentified man, Howard Quinn, C. E. Kelly; standing, Pewee DeWitt, Jack Nelson, and two unidentified men.



Royal Jackman, who was a sophomore in 1927, provided this photo from the Flow Sheet of that year, showing a group of Purity Squad members keeping an eye on a car below. The campus is in the near distance, the Power House at left and Main the dominant building in the center.

Cruising the campus for adventure in 1926-27 were, from left, Dean "Bevo" Bevan, Arturo Juan Maese, Harold Kersey, and Vincent Collinson. This photo appeared in the 1927 Flowsheet. Courtesy Dean Bevan.



This was a typical rally scene at the steps to Main Building in the late twenties. Lacking an assembly hall, the students gathered here for various kinds of meetings, and also utilized the flagpole at the head of the stairs for the freshman/sophomore flag competitions for many years. Royal Jackman, who took this picture with a camera that made glass negatives, believes this was a rally before a football game against the New Mexico Aggies.





Students and faculty at the College of Mines were able to view the famous Graf Zeppelin during its brief visit to El Paso on August 27, 1929. The craft carrying a crew of forty and sixteen passengers, was on an around-the-world flight from Friedrichshafen, Germany, via Tokyo, Los Angeles, and Lakehurst, New Jersey. The 21,700-mile trip was completed on September 4 in twenty days, four hours. Visible on the mountainside below are the "M" for Mines and the "E" for El Paso High School, which is located just below and to the left of the zeppelin. Courtesy Millard G. McKinney.



During the thirties and forties, before there was a Student Union, this was a popular campus gathering place between classes. The Co-op, which offered sandwiches, candy bars, and soft drinks, was in the east end of Main, the entrance just beyond the tree the student is leaning against. The Chemistry Building is at the left.