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(AUGUST 1955)

EARLY HISTORY OF N. Y. S. A. T. A.

Mary K. Harris

During the depression a small group of art teachers, Agnes Ryan, Rhoda Strebel, Katherine Weinschmunck and Mary Harris, meeting socially several times a year, always got around to discuss the lowly status of art education before their meetings broke up. Nothing resulted from these "get-togethers" for years, but in the late nineteen forties, tiring of their recurring problems, especially the common practice of school budget paring at the expense of art education, these teachers decided that something constructive needed to be done and that it would have to be initiated by them.

Since a strong, professional, statewide, art teachers' organization seemed to be what was most needed, the group contacted Mrs. Zara B. Kimmey, New York State Supervisor of Art and asked her to form such an organization. Very wisely, probably, Mrs. Kimmey replied that while she greatly approved of the group's objectives, an effective New York State Art Teachers' Association must be started from the bottom, not imposed from the top. She added that if the group could persuade the art teachers of one N. Y. State zone to organize the first chapter of a state art organization then she would be willing to call a statewide meeting to secure the cooperation of the art teachers in the other nine zones.

Since one member of this small group was chairman of the Art Section of the Central Zone at that time, the Central Zone was selected as the starting point.

As a first step the other three officers of the Central Zone Art Section, Hazel O'Hare, Roland Ivers and Forrest Weeks, were approached concerning their feelings with regard to a statewide art organization. Their cooperation was immediate and a series of planning meetings was held in Syracuse and in Utica by the original group augmented by three officers.

It was next decided to contact all art teachers in the Central Zone inviting them to attend an organizational meeting in the Board of Education Building in Utica, N. Y., Friday, April 14, 1948 at 2:30 p. m. Four people, none of whom attended this first meeting, made it possible.

Miss Laura Sheldon, Art Supervisor in Utica, who had previously loaned her centrally located office for numerous committee meetings. Mr. Andrew J. Burdick, then Superintendent of the Utica Public

Schools, arranged for the meeting place.

Mr. Burt D. Hawks, Utica School Principal, helped immeasurably in expediting the necessary clerical work not only for this meeting, but for the many others which followed it.

Mrs. Zara B. Kimmey, State Supervisor of Art, made possible the scheduling of the meeting on a school day, thus insuring a larger attendance.

Neither Mrs. Kimmey, who had a previous commitment, nor Miss Sheldon, who was ill at that time, was present May fourteenth, 1948, but both fully supported the projected program.

A preliminary meeting had been held April ninth, 1948. To quote:

"At the officers' meeting of the Central Zone Art Group last week, it was decided to have a meeting April 9, at 1 p. m., in Miss Sheldon's office. The aim is to unify the art teachers of this zone, and then of the entire state. We are inviting the officers of other zone art sections to be present to help us and to learn of our attempt. It was also decided that we should contact key persons in the Central Zone in advance so that they might talk up the idea. Then cards will be sent to everyone on the mailing list inviting them to the meeting.

"The business on hand is urgent. The officers feel that a stronger union will be to the advantage of every art teacher."

(Signed) Roland Ivers

At this meeting an invitation to a general meeting was formulated. To quote:

"For some time the officers of the Art Section of the Central Zone, N. Y. S. T. Assn., have felt that it would be to the advantage of everyone in our group to have a more effective organization.

"Therefore, on Friday afternoon, May 14th, at one o'clock in the School Administration Building, 13 Elizabeth St., Utica, N. Y., we are holding a meeting to discuss the formation of such an organization. We urge all art teachers in the Central Zone to be present."

(Signed) Mary Harris

Minutes of the May 14th, 1948 meeting included:

"The meeting was called by the officers of the Art Section of the Central Zone with the approval of Mrs. Kimmey.

"Motion was made and carried that we organize into an association that is to be called Central New York Art Teacher's Association.

"A constitution committee was

appointed. Lu Becker and Forrest Weeks, co-chairmen.

"There were 50 members present and they agreed unanimously to contribute one dollar apiece to help defray expenses until regular dues were decided upon."

As a result of this meeting Mrs. Kimmey mailed the following letter not only to the section officers of the various zones, but also to key art personnel throughout the state and to all the art teachers in the newly organized Central Zone Art Teachers' Association:

The State Education Department
Department of Drawing
Albany 1, N. Y.

May 28, 1948

Dear.....:

For some time the art teachers in the Central Zone have been anxious to see a strong art teachers' organization in our State. On Friday, May 14th, fifty of them met in Utica and unanimously agreed to organize the Central New York Art Teachers' Association.

In the hope that it would soon become one of the branches of an effective statewide organization of such public school art teachers, they have asked me to call a meeting of the officers of the art sections of all zones to make plans for such an association.

Personally, I think it is time that you art teachers had such a co-operative organization empowered to speak for all public school art teachers in this state on matters which are of primary concern to them.

For that reason I am planning a meeting this June to be held in Syracuse, N. Y. I have selected Syracuse because of its central location. The meeting will be held in the Board of Education Building, 409 W. Genesee St., on the date most acceptable to the majority.

The importance of our making every reasonable sacrifice to attend this meeting is obvious. A blank form has been provided at the end of this letter for your convenience in giving us your immediate reply. The character and purpose of this meeting invites the attendance of every art section officer of the zones. I am looking forward to greeting you personally at Syracuse on the date selected.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Zara B. Kimmey,
Supervisor of Art

On June 19, 1948, the meeting to organize a N. Y. S. A. T. A. was called to order at 2:10 p. m. by Mrs. Zara B. Kimmey, State Supervisor of Art in the Board of Education Building, Syracuse, N. Y., Miss Ed-

na Andrews, Art Supervisor, Syracuse, acting as hostess.

Mrs. Kimmey was elected chairman of the meeting by the 75 art educators there assembled. These 75 persons are the charter members of N. Y. S. A. T. A.

Mrs. Kimmey appointed Mr. Baker, New Rochelle, Mr. Dodds, New Rochelle, Mr. Exton, Palmyra, Mr. Flemming, Laurence, Miss Holcomb, Binghamton, as a constitution committee to draw up the aims and objectives and to formulate a constitution.

She also appointed an executive board:

Western — Mr. Rooney, Buffalo
Central Western — Mrs. Street, Fairport

Eastern — Miss Antolick, Mechanicville

Central — Miss Harris, New Hartford

Long Island — Mr. Page, Laurence

Southern — Mr. Ryerson, Elmira

North Central — Miss Melvin, Watertown

Northern — Miss Noxon, Ogdensburg

Westchester Area — Mr. Baker, New Rochelle

As no meeting of the above board was called by Mrs. Kimmey during the summer or fall of 1948 and no steps were taken to organize the other zones, it became necessary to reconvene in Syracuse the following spring and a meeting was arranged by Mrs. Kimmey for Saturday, April 30, 1949 at 10 a. m. in the Board of Education Building, Syracuse.

At this meeting the constitution was approved as amended and the following officers were elected for the ensuing year.

President — Bernard J. Rooney, Buffalo

Vice-president — Joseph Page, Laurence

Treasurer — Raymond Henry, Troy

Recording Secretary — Emma Lange, Buffalo

Corresponding Secretary — Mary Harris, New Hartford

It was decided a convention would be held in Buffalo on a Friday and Saturday weekend in the spring of 1950 and that the following year the convention would be held somewhere in the eastern part of the state.

The group also voted to issue an "Art Bulletin" twice yearly and Mr. Joseph Page volunteered to act as editor for one year.

With the adjournment of this meeting, N. Y. S. A. T. A. left infancy behind.