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NYSATA HISTORY: 1948 - 1991

1973 ARTICLE written by Raymond C. Henry
honoring NYSATA's 25th Anniversary
(1948-1973)

THE FLOWERING OF A QUARTER CENTURY PLANT

A Historical Sketch of the New York State Art Teachers Association

Some plants grow from seeds, others from slips carefully and tenderly cut and planted by a thoughtful person. The New York State Art Teachers Association was a vigorous branch cut from the New York State Teachers Association. It was a Victorian period and if we follow Biblical style we can say, "In the beginning" was Mrs. Kimmey. The State Teachers had a two day conference in every zone during October of each year. The art teachers were privileged to hold separate group meetings during one session each time. They had a program with exhibits and speakers appropriate for their field. A second meeting known as "The Spring Art Meeting" was also held annually in each zone of the State Teachers Association.

Mrs. Zara B. Kimmey was Supervisor of Art in New York State. She conceived the idea of art teachers being organized as a strong professional association, dedicated to the promotion and growth of art and art teachers in New York State education. She summoned by personal contact, a group of art teachers from all sections of the state.

On Saturday, June 18, 1948, she held the first organizational meeting in a downtown school in Syracuse. She presented the "idea" and explained in detail her plan for a "Section-State" association of art teachers. They were to meet as usual at the Fall Teachers Association conference, but in the Spring art teachers from all sections were to meet in a state wide convention. Lively discussion sparked by Stanley Czurles, B.J. Rooney and Larry Argiro enriched the meeting and the idea took root. They adjourned to take the information back to all the art teachers in the various zones across the State. They were to return the following year and report the reaction and results of their sales efforts.

Again, on Saturday, April 30, 1949, Mrs. Kimmey conducted the second meeting in the same room in Syracuse. The reaction from all zones was highly favorable and with unanimous approval of the 74 delegates present, the New York State Art Teachers Association was founded.

The 74 delegates present were considered Charter Members and officers proposed and accepted by unanimous vote were:

President	Bernard J. Rooney	Western
Vice President	Joseph E. Page	Long Island
Secretary	Emma A. Lange	Western
Treasurer	Raymond C. Henry	Eastern

At this point, Mrs. Kimmey bowed out and told the group that it was their association and now it was completely up to them to make it grow and blossom.

The delegates returned to their respective Sections. Section officers were chosen and the memberships solicited by them were forwarded to the State Treasurer, who for years assumed charge of membership and circulation.

According to the framework adopted by the delegates, the former Teachers Association Zones became "Sections" of the Art Association. A president was to be selected from a different Section by rotation each year and a Spring Convention was to be hosted by that Section under his leadership.

A few of the smaller Sections declined for lack of membership and resources to put a convention over. However, seven sections accepted in the following order: Western, Long Island, Southern, Eastern, Central Western, South Eastern and Central. Each of these Sections hosted three conventions as the circuit rotated completely three times.

After that, the Executive Council changed the Convention date to Fall, with the selection of the president from any area of the State and the privilege of holding the convention in any other area where there were adequate facilities. This new plan had some disadvantages since the enthusiasm of hosting a convention was a great boost to membership in various areas of the State and the opportunity for discovering leadership in the grass roots of Sections has been greatly modified.

Right here it should be said that we have been most fortunate over the years in finding dynamic leadership from all Sections of the State. Each president was a personality, and due to the ever present creative side of artists, each president has been completely different from the others. In their own way, they all brought the association to a pinnacle of enthusiasm and success with the annual convention each year.

The first convention was held in Buffalo under the able leadership of the new President, Bernard J. Rooney of the Western Section. The meetings took place in the Albright Art Gallery and in areas of the State College for Teachers. Buffalo was a beautiful city on this occasion. The wide quiet streets were lined with stately elms, having cathedral like arches, budding with fragrant yellow-green blossoms, on lovely Spring days.

The second convention was hosted by the Long Island Section, under Joe Page as President. It was conducted jointly with the Eastern Arts Convention in New York City. We held our meetings at Columbia University and the booth exhibits and social functions were held in the Pennsylvania Hotel, jointly with E.A.A.

The third convention, with Elbert W. Ryerson of the Southern Section, President, was the first complete convention with our own booth subscribers and the professional meetings, speakers and social functions all under one roof in the Mark Twain Hotel in Elmira. The event was a tremendous success and at once the pattern of all future conventions was established. Beginning on this occasion, a precedent was created which has resulted in NYSATA conventions being the most profitable and socially enjoyable of all conventions, as attested by commercial representatives, guest speakers and the membership at large. Our convention spirit has always confirmed "art as the joy of living as different from the struggle to keep alive."

The financial records of the association reflect the National trend. Usually this increase in the great American economy is lauded as prosperity. Yet if we look thoughtfully on dues increases and salary raises, we should reserve our concern for the most realistic factor. Are teachers relatively any better off in 1973 than they were in 1949? Have we gained anything in our economic status other than the satisfaction of handily more money?

The dues to cover the mailing fees for the 74 Charter Members was 25 cents. The balance turned over to the treasury of the new Association was \$7.04. In this first school year 1949-50 we enrolled 505 members and concluded the year with a treasury balance of \$302.71.

It is interesting to note that the dues for that year was \$1.00. The State fee was 60 cents and the Section fee 40 cents. The phenomenal increase in our National Economy on our Quarter Century Anniversary year has brought the dues to \$10.00 with a State Fee of \$6.00 and a Section fee of \$4.00. An increase of just ten times! In salaries we were getting \$2,000 to \$3,000 in good locations. Administrators rated \$4,000. It is doubtful if the spending power of present day dues and salaries is any better than 1949. Teachers, firemen, policemen, construction workers and others live their lives in the same relative grooves.

The success of NYSATA from the beginning can be attributed to several significant and unusual circumstances.

The moral and financial backing of the commercial firms not only made our conventions possible, but added so much to the enrichment of these events that literally hundreds of our members made every possible effort to attend every year. Booths and money were hard to come by in the early years, and such sincere salesmen as Bill Milliken and Andy Maloney gave us unending support. They encouraged their own companies and others by their example to exhibit, and in their contacts with art teachers they always gave a sales pitch for membership in the association, as well as for their products.

Since the days of Zara B. Kimmey our founder, we have enjoyed the complete support of the State Department. Vincent J. Popolizio, as head, has been most enthusiastic in promoting interest and membership. His associates have participated in every function of our organization, encouraging interest in our Section meetings and State conventions.

Lastly, but possibly the most important, has been the complete dedication and effort of many officers and committee chairmen, on a State and Section level, who were tireless in their energy and ambition to carry on and excell from year to year.

The Association has been an ambitious undertaking from the start and many of the officers have given, without compensation, as much time and effort to their responsibilities, as they have to their teaching jobs and with equal enthusiasm. It has been this spirit of interest and devotion which has overcome insurmountable obstacles from the beginning and made the New York State Art Teachers Association grow and blossom as the rose, over this quarter century.
