

It was a muggy ninety-three degrees at 2 P.M. when the educators assembled at the local Baptist church, situated across the street from today's Mayo Park. They named their new organization the Minnesota State Teachers Association (MSTA), nominated and elected officers, adopted a constitution, and formed committees on common schools, normal schools, and textbooks. A choir "discoursed some fine and appropriate

music," for the group's entertainment and Prof. Jabez Brooks, of Hamline University, spoke on the origin and structure of the English language. The first convention ended with a prayer and great hopes for the future. The state superintendent of public instruction and newly elected president, Benjamin F. Crary, later reported, "The Minnesota State Teachers Association will give form to the feeling and opinions of teachers,

hereafter, and will be an efficient auxiliary in executing the will of the Legislature."

**The association's first decade**

The nation and the state were in upheaval during the second annual convention in August 1862. The Civil War raged and President Crary was traveling with the Union Army's Third Minnesota Regiment. While educators met in St. Paul, Indians attacked New Ulm, killing ten white settlers and wounding fifty-seven. (In retaliation, thirty-eight Native Americans were hanged in Mankato, the largest mass execution in U.S. history.) A sixteen-year-old teacher named Marion Sloan had left her two younger sisters in charge of her school near Rochester while she attended the convention. The girls closed the school when news of the massacre reached them, and ran home to warn their parents. In St. Paul, however, MSTA business proceeded as planned. The fifty members attending passed an enlightened resolution: "Where equal services are rendered by either sex, they should be equally remunerated," a notion far ahead of its time.

Annual conventions were held in the state's populated Southeast region in the following years. The next three meetings were held in Hastings, Red Wing, and Winona, amid continuing Indian wars. After the 1866 meeting in Faribault, the convention returned to St. Paul in 1867. Since the original constitution had been lost, members created a new one, which was signed by forty-nine men and forty-nine women. The first woman officer, Mary Creek, of St. Paul, was elected treasurer and the first delegates to a national convention were appointed.

From the first, MSTA membership was evenly divided between men and women, but women were granted free membership in 1867 and their initiation fees were refunded. By 1877, dues were hotly debated, and covered in the *Mankato Record*. "Many of the ladies work for \$16 per month," one member argued. "They will

never get more until they walk up and pay their bills like men," was the reply, to a burst of female applause. As a compromise, women were admitted to the association for fifty cents, with annual dues of twenty-five cents—half the men's fee.

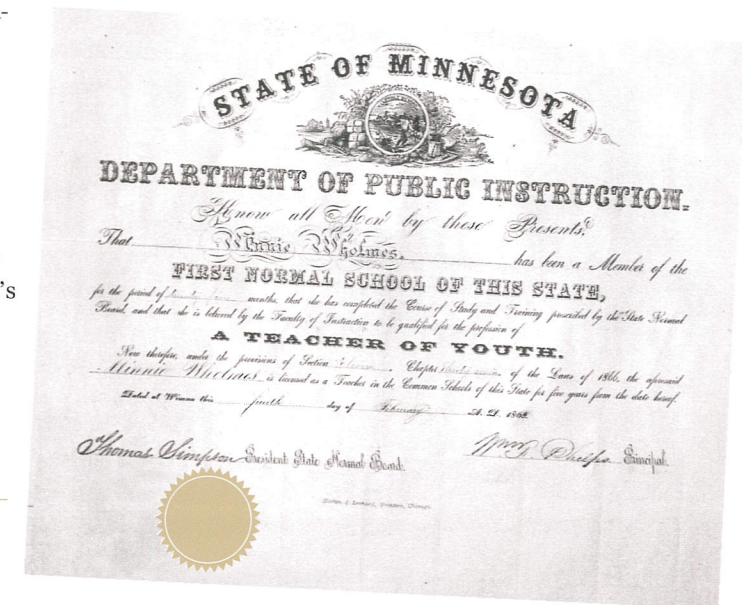
At the end of MSTA's first decade, Minnesota's pioneer days were drawing to a close. The state's population had swelled to nearly 500,000 as a wave of immigrants poured into the state from points east. Responding to these changes, the association encouraged members to contribute articles in foreign languages to newspapers to explain the importance of public education to Minnesota's new non-English-speaking immigrants.

**Philosophy shapes convention role**

As stated in its constitution, the MSTA was organized "to elevate the character and advance the interests of the profession of teaching and to promote the cause of popular education in the United States." This dual purpose blurred the association's mission and kept members torn between their desire to promote and improve public education and their need to better their own lives. Assertive efforts to improve compensation seemed crass and self-serving to most members, who aspired to a life of genteel respectability and professional status. Therefore, efforts to improve education came first, and teachers' personal welfare became secondary.

The association's membership also shaped its character. Not limited to teachers alone, mem-

■ In 1877, the Minnesota Legislature granted women the right to vote on all school questions and serve on school boards.

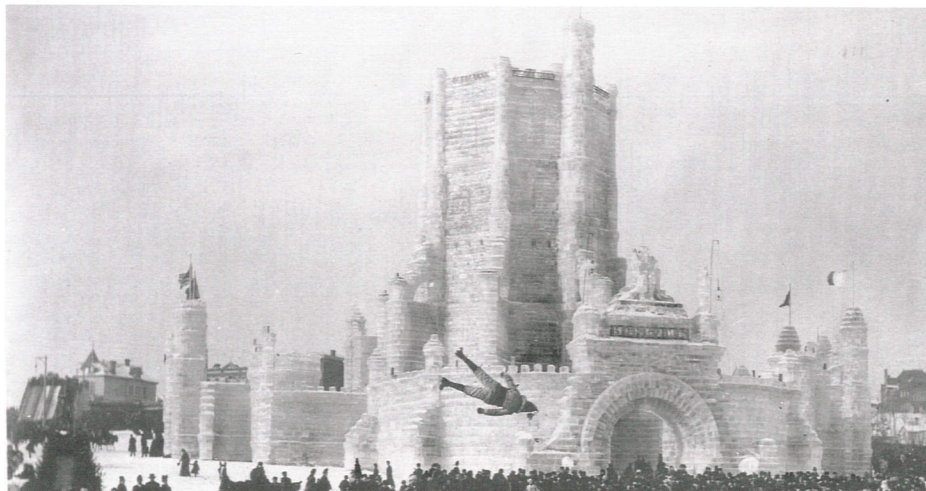


▲ In its early years, the MSTA supported stringent teacher certification standards to help improve the quality of public education. State teacher certification was initiated in the 1860s.



■ The MSTA's first president, the Reverend Dr. Benjamin F. Crary, was Indiana-born and -educated. He served as president of Hamline University from 1857 to 1860, before being named state superintendent of public instruction.

Teachers attending annual conventions in the Twin Cities enjoyed a wide range of activities and events. In 1887, the St. Paul Winter Carnival was a highlight. ▼



bership was granted in 1867 to “any person or friend of the cause of education.” Professional educators in the association ran the gamut from the president of the University of Minnesota to the teacher in a rural schoolhouse. In 1891, the high school council, the elementary education organization, and the county superintendents association merged with the association, shifting the balance of power away from the classroom teacher.

Leaders elected over the years included state superintendents of public instruction, a private seminary principal, university presidents, private college presidents, university deans, county and city superintendents, grade school principals, professors, church pastors, an attorney, a physician, and an insurance salesman. In its first 100 years, only four classroom teachers served as president of the association.

### The association takes a new name

In 1876, the Minnesota State Teachers Association changed its name to the Minnesota Education Association (MEA), perhaps to welcome all who were interested in education. In an address that year, MEA President B. H. Knorr stressed the importance of organizational strength and unity. “It does us good, now and then, to crawl out of our shells, shake hands with each other, and compare notes. Sympathy leads to cooperation—in my judgment the greatest need of the profession. Every other vocation has its unions and societies for mutual aid and why not ours?” he said. “God helps him that helps himself.”



### Convention issues

Before radio and television tied the state together, annual conventions were the chief forum for exchanging information and ideas. Bad roads, bad weather, jolting stagecoaches, and sparse railroads made convention attendance difficult and time-consuming, but educators welcomed the chance to gather and discuss the issues of the day.

The role of the Bible, religious instruction, and moral training in public schools evoked animated discussion in the early years. Other popular subjects included school administration, high schools and colleges, kindergarten, country school curriculum, libraries, compulsory education, manual training, and the township system. Discipline was a popular topic, and since corporal punishment was officially sanctioned by the



In 1920, MEA President Lotus D. Coffman, who later became president of the University of Minnesota, had a three-point agenda for education: an equal educational privilege and opportunity for every child in Minnesota, a competent teacher for every Minnesota child, and an adequate salary for every competent teacher.

Two of Coffman's goals were coming to fruition. Minnesota's growth in the post-war years brought more schools and teachers to the state. Teacher qualifications were improving, thanks to the MEA's push for improved professional standards. But MEA's dominance by school administrators kept the issue of adequate salaries for classroom teachers on the back burner. Demands for more pay and better working conditions were still considered unprofessional.



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President of the



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**Changing MEA structure**

In 1921, the MEA affiliated with its national counterpart, the National Education Association (NEA). The NEA supported the MEA with a wealth of statistics, information, and analysis on education trends. The information backed the MEA's efforts to improve school financing and benefits for teachers.

That same year the MEA hired C. G. Schulz as its first full-time executive secretary. A former superintendent of schools in Nicollet County and

MEA president in 1908, Schulz worked from his home in St. Paul with a part-time stenographer and a portable typewriter.

**Delegate assembly is created**

These structural changes came close on the heels of a major reorganization. In 1919, MEA members voted to bring Minnesota's seven outstate divisions into affiliation with the MEA. All-inclusive membership brought increased dues and a single membership fee to support the divisions and the state MEA. But increased convention attendance made it difficult to conduct business. So in 1922, the MEA created a delegate assembly, made up of representatives from each division, to conduct the MEA's affairs before each annual convention. Between sessions, an executive board of division leaders and MEA officers carried out the association's policy and activities.

For several years after division affiliation, both division and state conventions were held in the fall. But the time and expense of attending both conventions became burdensome, and in 1928 members voted to hold division and state conventions in alternate years. In even-numbered years, the MEA held its state convention. In odd-numbered years, division conventions were held in seven geographic centers in the state. The St. Paul and Minneapolis divisions combined their programs.

**Growth of locals**

The MEA's first local associations—Duluth, Rochester, and Virginia—were organized in 1921. Further organization faltered until the 1930s—Albert Lea was organized in 1935, Winona and Hibbing in 1936.

In 1936, the MEA approved the formation of county locals and encouraged them to affiliate with the association. This assertive campaign for members coincided with the founding of a rival teachers union, the Minnesota Federation of



◀ Members of the MEA delegate assembly were seated by division in the Hotel Lowry ballroom in 1943.

■ The MEA was the birthplace of the Minnesota Parent/Teachers Association, which formed in 1922.

■ In 1921, the MEA hired C. G. Schulz as its first full-time executive secretary. A former superintendent of schools for Nicollet County and MEA president in 1908, Schulz worked from his home in St. Paul for two years, then in other MEA locations until he retired in 1936.

◀ MEA conventions provided an excellent opportunity for Twin Cities restaurants, hotels, and retailers to boost their business. Display ads like these in the 1925 MEA convention program increased a business' exposure to visiting teachers and provided revenue to the MEA.

■ A former teacher, principal, and superintendent in Ely, Minnesota, Walter E. Englund joined the MEA as its first field director in 1935. In 1936, he succeeded C. G. Schulz to become the MEA's second executive secretary. Known as "Mr. MEA," Englund served until 1957.

Teachers (MFT), which formed the same year. The militant MFT drew strength from its alignment with the rising labor movement in the depression-battered cities in the 1930s. Many teachers, particularly those in the strong union towns of St. Paul and Minneapolis, were attracted to the more aggressive, labor-inspired tactics of the MFT. Loath to identify with the working class movement, the MEA continued to emphasize professionalism and service.

**Growing professionalism**

MEA members had traditionally viewed professional training as a route to increased status and security. This notion was first voiced in the 1860s, when a member argued that rigid standards "would rid the schools of many poor teachers and thus make tenure of office of longer duration." By 1928, the MEA endorsed two years of professional training beyond high school for elementary teachers. In 1936, four years were recommended.

**Legislative gains**

After a disappointing teacher retirement bill was passed in 1915, the MEA continued to work for an improved pension for teachers. On the morning of April 30, 1931, President Guy E. Maxwell was mounting the steps to his office at Winona State Teachers College when a Western Union messen-

ger approached him with an urgent telegram for his colleague, Theda Gildemeister. Fearing the worst, President Maxwell told the faculty to stand by to help her cope with bad news. When she read the telegram she burst into laughter. "Bill passed at three a.m. C. G. Schulz," it read. The State Teachers' Retirement Fund was approved.

The MEA also worked hard for passage of the Tri-City Tenure Law, known as the Hallam Bill, for former Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Oscar Hallam, who drew it up for the MEA. In 1927, the law took effect in Minneapolis, St. Paul,

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## THE MEA COMES OF AGE

MEA members were treated to the best in entertainment on their trips to the convention. Members went on excursions to parks and landmarks, such as Minnehaha Falls, and attended concerts by vocal and instrumental soloists, choirs, and string groups. The Minneapolis Symphony and the St. Paul Civic Opera conducted special performances for visiting teachers on a number of occasions. Keynote speakers were a convention highlight and MEA members were exposed to leading philosophers, editors, political and social leaders, humorists, literary figures, explorers, and military leaders. A few notables in the early years were Booker T. Washington, in 1901; Jane Addams, director of Hull House, in 1905; and politician William Jennings Bryan, in 1911. Other prominent speakers included poet Carl Sandburg, in 1935; historian Will Durant, in 1941; author Sinclair Lewis, in 1942; Senator J. W. Fulbright, in 1947; politician Nelson A. Rockefeller, in 1954; former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, in 1955; and rocket scientist Wernher von Braun, in 1959.







and Duluth, guaranteeing that “in the name of professional progress, good teachers should be protected and incompetents be decreased.” Teachers were granted tenure after a three-year probationary period.

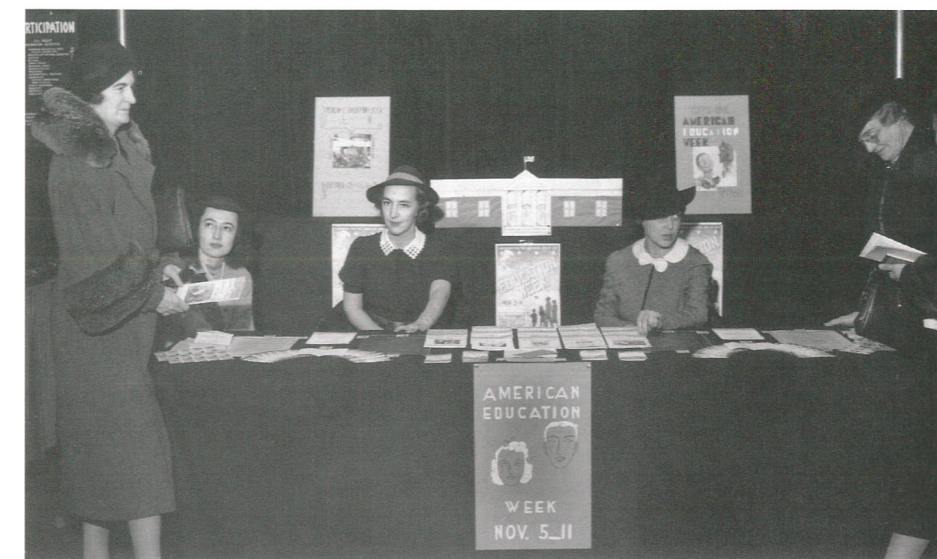
Job security was grim for the rest of the state’s teachers. Teacher contracts were effective for only one year, and unless the school board took positive steps to renew a teacher’s contract, the teacher was automatically terminated. The board was not required to notify teachers it didn’t intend to rehire. In many cases, school boards delayed filling positions until late summer, leaving teachers in a state of uncertainty.

The Continuing Contract Law of 1937 remedied that situation by extending tenure to teachers throughout the state. Once employed, a teacher’s contract continued year to year. Termination required a majority vote by the entire school board or written resignation by the teacher before April 1. The serious flaw was that school boards were not required to give a reason for dismissal if action was taken before April 1.

Despite these legislative gains, teachers’ salaries were still abysmal. The MEA frequently reaffirmed its belief in equal pay and improved

**Elizabeth Hall, assistant superintendent of schools in Minneapolis, was the MEA’s first woman president in 1914. Other female presidents in the MEA’s first century included:**

- 1916, Isabel Williams, a classroom teacher in St. Paul**
- 1921, Theda Gildemeister, of Winona State Teachers College**
- 1934, Daisy Brown, of Stillwater**
- 1938, Myrtle Hooper Dahl, an elementary school teacher in Minneapolis**
- 1942, Mary C. Doyle, a high school teacher in St. Paul**
- 1950, Josephine Kremer, of Austin**
- 1956, Florence Bennett, of St. Cloud State**
- 1960, June Otterness, an elementary principal in Hutchinson**



teacher salaries, but negotiating a salary increase was up to the individual teacher. A school board could politely listen to a teacher’s request and say no, or it could simply refuse to listen at all. With no legal recourse, a teacher was forced to accept the board’s offer or resign.

In 1936, a notice appearing in the *Minnesota Journal of Education* was indicative of the times: “Full salaries for October and November were voted Minneapolis teachers by the Board of Education. The December pay check will necessarily be reduced by whatever is needed to balance the budget for the year.”

**Post World War II changes**

Between 1946 and 1949, America readjusted to civilian life. Soldiers returned home and entered college on the GI Bill of Rights. Women left their jobs to return home and raise children. A growing Baby Boom generation would bring 33 million students to America’s public schools in the 1950s. There was an acute shortage of classroom teachers throughout the nation, but there were far too many school districts.

▲ Twin Cities teachers staff the American Education Week booth at the Twin Cities Division convention in 1939.

Elizabeth Hall, assistant superintendent of schools, Minneapolis, served as the MEA’s first woman president in 1914. ▼





## THE MEA COMES OF AGE



▲The MEA Legislative Committee met in 1938 to discuss issues. Members included (seated, left to right) Mary R. Byrnes; Walter E. Englund, executive secretary; Daisy Brown, chairman; Myrtle Hooper Dahl, MEA president; Alice McCarthy; (standing, left to right) Elmer M. Weltzin; S. G. Reinertsen; W. W. Pennell; W. H. Detamore; and C. B. Diers.

Minnesota's school district reorganization law, passed in 1947, encouraged small school districts to merge into larger units. The first consolidation in 1948 merged nine Ramsey County districts into a single Roseville district. By 1963, the number of Minnesota school districts had dropped from 7,606 to 2,150.

Fewer districts meant more effective use of public funds and improved education for children. But it also concentrated the power of school boards and set many teachers adrift in a large and impersonal bureaucracy. One hundred years after public education was established in Minnesota, teachers remained second-class citizens in a society that placed a high value on economic success.

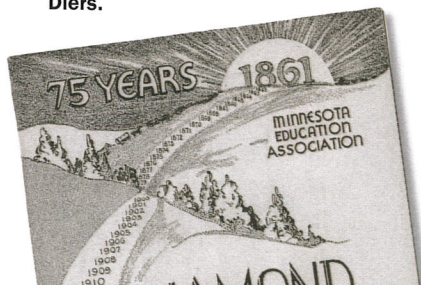
The organization Gallop inherited was in serious financial shape. Gallop developed the MEA's first bookkeeping system after learning that the association was storing its money in a cigar box in an office closet. Members were registered by hand in an antiquated ledger. "I've often jokingly said that I had more worries about the MEA checkbook than my own," said Gallop. "We were in bigger trouble than anybody knew. So I knew where every dime was and how it was handled, and we began to build a little more sophistication."

A new era of unity and collective identity was emerging in the teaching profession as well. Two Twin Cities strikes in the late 1940s signaled changes ahead. For the first time, men were entering public school teaching in large numbers, bringing new demands and expectations. The ambitious new MEA management was quick to respond to changing times with new services and benefits for teachers.

### TEPS emphasizes professional standards

The MEA organized the Minnesota Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards (TEPS) in 1947. Modeled on the national movement launched by the NEA that year, the Minnesota TEPS Commission set an aggressive agenda to improve standards in selection, recruitment, preparation, certification, and in-service growth of teachers and the institutions that prepared them.

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**A new generation of management**

The post-war years also ushered in a new style of management at the MEA. In 1950, the MEA hired a new research director named A. L. "Bud" Gallop. When MEA Executive Secretary Walter Englund retired in 1956, Gallop succeeded him.

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**Members receive insurance benefits**

Under Gallop's leadership, the MEA began to offer teachers a broader range of insurance options. Health insurance had been available to members since 1931. But in 1956, the MEA selected the teacher-owned Horace Mann Insurance Company to provide members with auto, medical, and life insurance.

Although lawsuits were rare, Gallop recognized the need to provide occupational liability insurance to members. Some teachers had been held personally responsible for accidents or incidents involving students in their care. In those instances, teachers had often lost their jobs or been thrust into bankruptcy. So Gallop invited Horace Mann's president, Les Nimmel, to attend a board meeting in Minneapolis to discuss the liability insurance issue. "We met in a basement meeting room one night at the Curtis Hotel," said Gallop. "As the board was conducting its business, Les took a napkin and wrote 'five cents' on it, slid it to me, and asked, 'Is that too much per member?' I said, 'Fine, we'll take it.'"

For a nickel a member, Horace Mann provided MEA members with \$10,000 in occupational



liability coverage, a benefit that became a major selling point for new members. In return, Gallop was required to join the Horace Mann board of directors and purchase \$100 in company stock. "In those days, \$100 was a lot of money," said Gallop. "But I bought the shares."

**MEA sets ethical standards**

Also in 1956, the MEA created an Ethics Committee to generate awareness of ethical standards in the profession. Three years later, the MEA established an Ethics Commission, which was hailed as one of the greatest steps forward in MEA history. "Stand a little straighter, hold your head a little higher. Teaching in Minnesota is reaching full professional maturity," reported the *Minnesota Journal of Education*. While the committee served as an informational body, the commission applied the ethics code to concrete ethics cases, seeking facts, identifying issues, and working for conciliation. It also helped protect teachers from false accusations.



▲ On the MEA's seventy-fifth anniversary in 1936, current and past presidents gathered for a celebration. They included (front, left to right) Floyd Moe, Lotus D. Coffman, Isabel Williams, Daisy Brown, (back, left to right) C. H. Barnes, R. B. MacLean, E. M. Phillips, J. A. Van Dyke, and G. H. Sanberg.

◀ MEA Executive Secretary A. L. Gallop (right) met with Minnesota Gov. Orville L. Freeman at the close of the 1959 state legislative session. Governor Freeman held a newly signed teacher retirement and social security bill, which was passed by the legislature with MEA support.



## THE MEA COMES OF AGE



▲ Home Economics was a standard part of a girl's education in 1950.

In 1937, MEA President Walter Englund (center) broadcast the MEA's weekly "North Star School" program on WCCO radio, along with civic leaders, educators, and radio personnel. The program provided musical entertain-

### Teacher benefits

By 1953, 95 percent of Minnesota teachers had provisions for sick leave and professional leave, but most schools did not grant paid jury duty, maternity leave, or religious holidays. But advances had been made in teacher tenure. In 1951, the Continuing Contract Law was strengthened with the passage of the Fair Dismissal Law, which required school boards to give teachers written notice and reasons for dismissal. A teacher threatened with dismissal was given ten days to request a hearing before the school board, which was required before final action was taken. The detailed statute was to become a battleground between teachers and local school boards.

### The eternal salary problem

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Al Thiemich, who started teaching in the 1950s, was one of those young men who pushed the school board for more pay. "The board would put us last on the agenda, which meant we got on about eleven at night," said Thiemich, who later served as a deputy executive director at the MEA. "We would sit there and kid around and try to talk them into it. When it got to be about two in the morning, they were so tired that they finally would give in. There was no law to support us, so we used to call it collective begging."

This arbitrary power of school boards, their disregard for the teaching profession, and resulting pay inequities were sore spots at the MEA. Bud Gallop addressed these problems in a 1953 article in the *Minnesota Journal of Education*: "Differentials to men and to married men as evidenced in so many salary schedules in Minnesota are in direct conflict with the principle of the single salary schedule for which the organized profession has stood so firmly for many years...Married men receive \$300 above schedule in one system. A widow with dependents receives \$100 above schedule in this same system. Is there a difference in the extent of family responsibility or financial requirement? And more to the point, should need







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In 1951, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics published standards indicating the income a family in Minneapolis needed to maintain itself at a "necessary minimum." The standards revealed that more than half of Minnesota's teachers were not paid enough to sustain themselves at this modest level. Yet the impact of men in teaching



◀ In the 1940s, the MEA was the leading teacher organization in Minnesota's rural and small town school districts. This second grade classroom in Plainview, taught by Mrs. Lillian Prescher, typified the small town school.

■ The *MEA Newsletter*, first circulated in 1914, became *The Minnesota Teacher* in 1921. It was named the *Journal of the Minnesota Education Association* in 1924, and finally, in 1927, it became the *Minnesota Journal of Education*. Published ten times a year, the *Journal* ceased publication in 1971 and was replaced by a tabloid publication that eventually became known as the *MEA Advocate*.

■ In 1930, 14,585 Minnesota teachers were MEA members, 66 percent of the teachers in the state. By 1960, MEA membership stood at 90 percent of the state's teachers, with 27,382 members.

be the determiner of salary? Is a man with four years of training so much more valuable than a woman from the same teacher preparation institution with four years of training? Extra pay because of sex, extra work, or other reasons is a clear indication that the board of education feels that the salary schedule is too low for some teachers; why not raise the salary of all teachers rather than lift a few above the others?"

Working conditions, rather than salary, almost drove former MEA President Jim Rosasco out of teaching in 1955, his first year.

"Superintendents had entire dictatorial control," he recalled. "I couldn't understand the pettiness and the paternalistic approach they had, and the lack of respect for teachers. You couldn't decide the curriculum, you had no say in discipline or direction. Teachers had no control over what books were used."

In many districts, women were still forced to make the choice between family and teaching. Even in the 1950s, some districts refused to employ married women. Other districts allowed marriage, but refused to employ women with





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**MEA gets a permanent home**

In April 1956, the MEA proudly announced the opening of its new headquarters, proclaiming it "Minnesota's new educational center—professional home of the 24,000 member Minnesota Education Association. Built and paid for by the teachers dedicated to the advancement of education."

The Kasota stone structure was a long time coming. When the first staff was hired in the early 1920s, the MEA couldn't afford an office, much less a building of its own. This shortage of funds kept the association in a series of temporary locations for decades.

An MEA Building Committee searched for a building site for more than twenty years. In 1949, the focus shifted to fund raising and a percentage of member dues was set aside for a building fund. In 1954, the committee finally identified a site at the corner of Sherburne Avenue and Cedar Street in St. Paul. But the land was zoned for residential, church, hospital, or educational use only. A St. Paul city attorney tried to block the project, but the MEA persevered and won the right to build.

Construction of the \$314,000 project began in 1955, financed by "certificates of indebtedness" sold to members and a loan from Horace Mann Insurance. A year later, the new MEA headquarters stood on the hill above the Minnesota State Capitol at 41 Sherburne Avenue.

The MEA's new proximity to the legislature, coupled with the political skills of MEA Executive

**In 1936, the MEA began to reach out to the public through an annual exhibit at the Minnesota State Fair. The association also broadcast a weekly radio program throughout the state beginning in the 1930s. The MEA turned to television in 1957. For two years, it sponsored a public television program called "The Open Door," to present educational news and honor teachers around the state.**

children under the age of eighteen. But throughout Minnesota, the fourth month of pregnancy put an end to a teacher's employment, even in districts more amenable to families. These teachers had no assurances of being rehired. If they did get their jobs back, their prior experience was voided and they began at entry level pay.

Yet in the largest districts, teachers were beginning to band together to engage in formalized discussions with the school districts. These early salary committees had no formal rules or legal backing, but they were beginning to make headway.

Secretary Bud Gallop, was soon to make the association a major force in determining education legislation and funding.

**MEA nears end of first century**

As the 1950s closed, the MEA had nearly 28,000 members in 450 local associations. A staff of about twenty worked with twenty committees. A century-long emphasis on quality education had produced the MEA Professional Ethics Commission. The Minnesota TEPS movement was soon to result in a four-year degree minimum preparation for teachers.

MEA membership was open to "any person qualified as a teacher under the laws of Minnesota or regularly engaged in education work in the state." In addition to classroom teachers and school administrators, the MEA included substitute teachers and school secretaries. College students were eligible for membership in the Student-MEA and retired teachers held associate status.

Member benefits included low-cost insurance of all kinds, including occupational liability coverage. Members also had access to a credit union, legal service, salary assistance, and leadership training. Every member received the *Minnesota Journal of Education* and enjoyed the MEA convention.

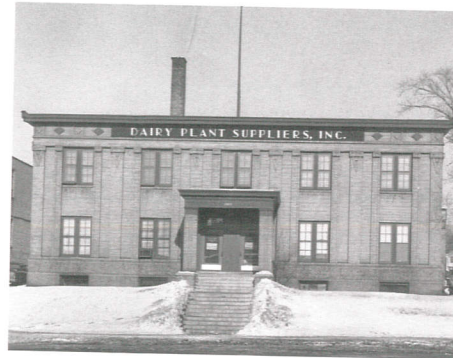
But the nation stood on the brink of enormous social and economic change. The upheaval that followed would dramatically change the structure and direction of the MEA.



Construction of the MEA Building began in 1955 with a groundbreaking ceremony. MEA President Florence Dunn Bennett turned the first spade, while past president A. L. Almen (far left), architect Louis Lundgren, Executive Secretary W. E. Englund, Grant Construction's Fred Murnane, and E. H. Sitzer looked on. When completed, the MEA Building stood at the corner of Sherburne and Cedar, one block from the Minnesota State Capitol.



## THE MEA COMES OF AGE



Beginning in 1921, when C. G. Schultz became the MEA's first full-time staff member, the association operated from a series of St. Paul locations, including: College Avenue and Sixth Street (apartment building, lower right), 2642 University Avenue (above Bruce Publishing, top left), and 2429 University Avenue (dairy building, top right).



children under the age of eighteen. But throughout Minnesota, the fourth month of pregnancy put an end to a teacher's employment, even in districts more amenable to families. These teachers had no assurances of being rehired. If they did get their jobs back, their prior experience was voided and they began at entry level pay.

Yet in the largest districts, teach

### MEA gets a permanent home

In April 1956, the MEA proudly announced the opening of its new headquarters, proclaiming it "Minnesota's new educational center—professional home of the 24,000 member Minnesota Education Association. Built and paid for by the teachers dedicated to the advancement of education."

The Kasota stone structure was a long time coming. When the first staff was hired in the early 1920s, the MEA couldn't afford an office, much less a building of its own. This shortage of funds kept the association in a series of temporary locations for decades.

An MEA Building Committee searched for a building site for more than twenty years. In 1949, the focus shifted to fund raising and a percentage of member dues was set aside for a building fund. In 1954, the committee finally identified a site at the corner of Sherburne Avenue and Cedar Street in St. Paul. But the land was zoned for residential, church, hospital, or educational use only. A St. Paul city attorney tried to block the project, but the MEA persevered and won the right to build.

Construction of the \$314,000 project began in 1955, financed by "certificates of indebtedness" sold to members and a loan from Horace Mann Insurance. A year later, the new MEA headquarters stood on the hill above the Minnesota State Capitol at 41 Sherburne Avenue.

The MEA's new proximity to the legislature, coupled with the political skills of MEA Executive



## MEA ADAPTS TO SOCIAL CHANGE

On August 27, 1961, MEA President Melvin Voxland (far left), MEA officials, educators, and descendants of the organization's early leaders met in Rochester's Mayo Park to dedicate a plaque commemorating the MEA centennial. ►

In the early 1960s, the modern, new MEA Building was a popular attraction for teachers visiting at convention time. ▼



When the MEA ended its first century, it had nearly 29,000 members in 448 local associations and was the majority association in 98 percent of Minnesota's school districts. The state organization, represented by a delegate assembly of 118 classroom teachers and forty-nine administrators, had passed 1,018 resolutions. "MEA—a powerful force for better education" was the association's slogan.

To MEA members and the general public, the MEA convention was still the association's most visible activity. Families planned their fall activities around "MEA Days" because their kids were out of school. Advertisers heralded the event a month in advance. The third Thursday and Friday in October brought thousands of teachers

delegate assembly met at St. John's School, just steps away from the association's founding site. In August, the MEA capped its historical celebration with the dedication of a plaque in Rochester's Mayo Park.



### Society in transition

Social change began to stir the nation in the early 1960s, particularly its youth. The war in Vietnam sparked student protests. Unjust treatment of women and minorities produced a civil rights movement. An exploding student population created a tremendous demand for teachers. Students graduating from college with teaching degrees had multiple job choices, but the economics of the profession were terrible. "Many of these students came into teaching and brought their activism with them," said MEA Executive Director



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**Strength in the legislature**

By the 1960s, MEA Executive Secretary Bud Gallop was one of the two most powerful and

into the Twin Cities for the convention, and it commanded front-page coverage in metro dailies. In 1961, the MEA celebrated its centennial in Rochester, where it all began. In April, the



◀ In the 1960s, MEA Executive Secretary Bud Gallop (left) built the organization into a powerful political force. In January 1963, Gallop and Harvey W. Schmidt, MEA director of research, discuss legislative issues on the way to the State Capitol.

■ In 1961, the MEA-endorsed requirement for four years of preparation for teachers was signed into law. In 1962, 90 percent of rural elementary school teachers and 14 percent of city elementary teachers still had fewer than three years of college training.

■ Term limits for MEA presidents went through a dramatic transformation beginning in the 1960s. Step by step, the association moved from the single one-year term, to a two-year, then three-year term, before its acceptance of three, three-year terms.



## MEA ADAPTS TO SOCIAL CHANGE



▲ **Fulton Klinkerfues**, assistant principal at John Glenn High School in North St. Paul, was the first full-time MEA president from 1966 to 1968. At age 37, he was the youngest president elected to date and he represented a new breed of aggressive teachers demanding change. He headed IMPACE for five years following his presidency.

The MEA completed a second floor on its headquarters building in 1963. In October 1962, Gov. Elmer L. Andersen (far left), Executive Secretary Bud Gallop, Commissioner of Education Erling O. Johnson, and MEA President Melvin Voxlund took part in a ceremonial "roof breaking." An addition was made to the

influential education lobbyists in the state. Gallop, along with School Board Association lobbyist Bill Wettergren, shaped the legislative agenda for Minnesota public schools. The media referred to the two as "The Gold Dust Twins" and "The One-Two Punch in Education."

Gallop's legislative prowess was legendary and he had built his following from the ground up. When Gallop joined the MEA in the 1950s, the association attempted to promote its legislative agenda by giving each legislator an apple. "The 'apple from the teacher' was a clever, kind, nice thing," said Gallop. "We were doing all nice things." But Gallop had other ideas.

Under Gallop, the MEA kept members informed about legislation affecting teachers and school finance. MEA questionnaires were sent to political candidates to determine their stands on important issues. In his weekly *Window on Legislation* newsletters, Gallop reviewed every education bill introduced and acted on in the Minnesota House and Senate. "I spent every hour of the day running around this state talking legislation," said Gallop. "And members were anxious to hear what was happening."

Gallop believed teacher involvement in the political process was the best route to change. "This organization does its work through state law," he said. "You can't get teacher salaries improved any other way. Every education decision is a political decision. What I was trying to do was make teachers understand that they

Gallop's honesty, skill, and integrity made him a respected and effective figure in the legislature and transformed the MEA into a powerful political force. "A call to each of the nine division chairmen around the state could generate 20,000 telegrams overnight," said Gallop. "That kind of power was a hundred times better than an apple from the teacher. For a few years, I felt we were probably the most effective lobby in the state."

### Gallop guides the association

Under Gallop's strong leadership, MEA presidents came and went and each had a different idea of what the job entailed. Some were mere figureheads who presided at monthly board meetings after reviewing the agenda with Gallop the day





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Gallop's call for grassroots political involvement by teachers brought carloads of teachers to every precinct caucus in Minnesota one year, where they virtually took over. He encouraged MEA members to write letters to legislators who supported the MEA's agenda. The facts and statistics on education he generated were considered the most reliable in the state.

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before. "It was impossible for presidents to assume any kind of power because they were in and out of office so quickly," said former Executive Director Pat Churchill.

For years, the presidency alternated annually from man to woman, which emphasized the symbolic nature of the office. In addition to the short term of office, presidents worked only part time for the MEA and maintained responsibilities to their school districts.

**Klinkerfues stirs up the troops**

In 1966, the MEA elected a new breed of president, Fulton Klinkerfues, who barnstormed the state promoting aggressiveness and change. He told teachers to stand up and be counted, and demanded local political action and unity. His angry, in-your-face style set him apart from past presidents, but he struck a chord with the "young turks" who were frustrated with the system. "Before I came along, school districts were proud when the MEA president came from their district," said Klinkerfues. "After me they weren't so proud anymore. I had to be the tool that was turning the organization around. And I had to go out and make some pretty nasty statements about school boards in order to get the troops fired up."

Klinkerfues' blunt, angry statements shocked the system, but he and many others felt the time had come. "Teachers are fed up with talk that they aren't really determined in their fight for right, that they are just talking. We are determined. And it's about time that somebody had the courage to tell the public what teachers want," he wrote in 1966. "Teachers have every justification to fight for their rights including the right to be listened to by school boards, many of which are dragging their feet and seem bent on a collision course with teachers. This kind of behavior on the part of the boards only makes teachers frustrated and angry and brings them to the verge of rebellion. Perhaps this all sounds like a lot of saber-



◀ In the 1960s, Minnesota had the largest Future Teachers of America (FTA) membership in the United States, with more than 6,000 members in Minnesota high schools. The Student-Minnesota Education Association, organized for college students, had 5,200 members, placing it among the three largest college organizations in the country.

rattling, but the simple fact is that teachers are people, too. What others want—and are getting—we want, and intend to get."

Klinkerfues' single-minded determination to improve the lives of teachers was all-consuming. "As things heated up, I saw the part-time presidency wasn't going to work," he said. "At the beginning of my second year I went in and proposed to the MEA board, Mr. Gallop, and my superintendent that I be a full-time president.

▶ In 1961, high school students in Mankato leave the building at the end of the day. ▼





## TEACHERS TAKE ACTION



uninterrupted hour for grading papers or preparing lesson plans. Students spent preparation time in classes taught by art, music, and physical education specialists, providing them with a broader, more well-rounded education.

### **Society problems**

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In the midst of these advances, the character of the greater society was changing dramatically. Rising divorces and out-of-wedlock births led to a proliferation of single-parent families. In most two-parent families, economic pressures made it necessary for both parents to work. A growing drug problem emerged among the nation's youth and a wave of immigrants brought more non-English speaking children into public schools. The Gray Panther movement also surfaced, with senior citizens asserting more power at the ballot box. A landslide presidential victory by Ronald Reagan in 1981 signaled a new political shift that would carry through the decade.

### **"A Nation at Risk"**

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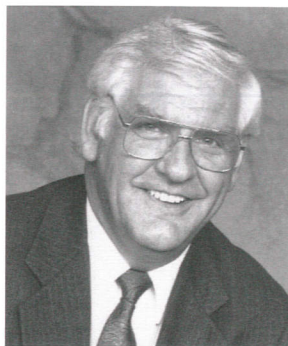
In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published a harsh indictment of public education called "A Nation at Risk." The report claimed that America was in danger of being engulfed in a "rising tide of mediocrity in elementary and secondary schools" because students were not studying the right subjects, not working hard enough, and not learning enough. It also claimed that schools suffered from slack and uneven standards and poor teaching.



## TEACHERS TAKE ACTION

MEA officials, past and present, gathered to celebrate the organization's 125th anniversary in 1986. They included (left to right) Melvin Voxland, Nick Duff, Marti Zins, Bob Astrup, Gordon Mork, and Jim Rosasco. ▶

■ In 1986, the MEA-affiliated Rochester Education Association marked the MEA's 125th anniversary with a ceremony on the grounds of the Mayo Civic Center. A commemorative plaque, dug up during construction of a new arena, was rededicated.



▲ In 1986, Mounds View history teacher Bob Astrup was elected president of the MEA.

districts from more than 2,000 in the early 1960s to only 434 in the early 1980s. The MEA and its members faced new challenges—how to deliver quality education to crowded and diverse urban schools as well as to shrinking rural schools.

But ongoing attacks by external groups had given the MEA new purpose and helped it establish strong new ties. By the late 1980s, the MEA had put aside its differences with other education groups and formed a broad coalition working to fund schools. For the first time in history, teachers were working side by side with school boards.

“The MEA found out that unless they came together, there wasn’t going to be any funding and nobody would win,” said former MEA President Bob Arnold, who served throughout the 1980s as executive director of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association. “Schools would lose, communities would lose, and kids would lose.”



## MEA ADAPTS TO SOCIAL CHANGE

In 1968, Bud Gallop's secretary, Donna Adams, staffed the MEA booth at the Minnesota State Fair, a tradition that began in 1936. The booth was a popular visiting site for parents and teachers alike. ►

■ When the NEA approved a "withdrawal of services" resolution in 1968, strikes were taking place all over the country. In 1966 there were thirty-three strikes nationally; in 1967, there were 105.

■ In 1962, President John F. Kennedy's Executive Order 10988 authorized federal government employees to unionize. This landmark decree inspired teachers seeking the right to negotiate their wages and working conditions.

■ The MEA amended its bylaws in the late 1960s to assure ethnic minority representation on the board and



This was rather shocking, and a lot of people worried as to what would be the function of the MEA president versus the MEA executive director."

Klinkerfues' style did conflict with Gallop's, who favored controlled change. "Klinkerfues was the first real modern-day collective bargaining president the MEA had," said Churchill. "He was so militant that Mr. Gallop warned us about riding with him to meetings. He didn't want the staff to become too militant." From that moment, a

didn't have the skills to do it. "We saved hundreds of teachers because the boards couldn't follow the law, and the case would be dismissed because they had not provided due process," said former Deputy Executive Director Al Thiemich.

In 1967, the Minnesota State Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional to exclude teachers from the state's public employee bargaining law. The strong MEA lobbying campaign that followed resulted in the 1968 Meet and Confer Act, which required school boards to bargain with