

file - MTA History

MASSACHUSETTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

14 Beacon Street, Boston

July 15, 1955

# A Bit of MTA - MTF History

**T**HE Massachusetts Teachers Association of 1955 was originally organized on February 18, 1911, as the Massachusetts Teachers Federation. The MTF was the result of a movement to establish a federation of teachers associations, headed by Ernst Makechnie of Somerville who became the first president.

On April 23, 1909, Mr. Makechnie held a meeting in his home to which were invited representatives of various teachers associations for the purpose of discussing such a project. Those who went were Frederick A. Pitcher of Chelsea, Charles H. Westcott of Malden, Harriet P. Ryder of Arlington, A. Marion Merrill of Somerville, Minnie S. Turner of Somerville, and Frederick W. Coburn of Winchester.

Other meetings followed, and on October 8, 1910, at a meeting at Boston University under the chairmanship of Mr. Makechnie, action was taken on a constitution. The original signers of this document were Mr. Makechnie, Maude M. Mixer of Cambridge, Rhoda A. Orr of Revere, Walter I. Hamilton of New Bedford, Walter I. Chapman of Attleboro, Albert L. Bacheller of Lowell, M. J. Shannon of Framingham, Frank E. Poland of Malden, Harry W. Leland of Leominster, Louis D. Cook of Everett, M. A. Arnold of Everett, Henry H. Harris of Lowell, and Howard W. Poor of Somerville, in that order. They too may be classed among the individuals who founded the Massachusetts Teachers Federation.

### The MTF Is Born

Then followed the real birth of the Federation at the first annual meeting of February 18, 1911, at Boston University, with twenty-seven delegates present. The constitution was adopted and officers were elected as follows: president, Mr. Makechnie; vice presidents, Walter I. Hamilton of New Bedford and Belle F. Batchelder of Lowell; secretary, Howard W. Poor of Somerville; treasurer, Frank L. Whipple of Lynn. Also, the following directors were elected: Elton L. Blaisdell of Lynn, Walter I. Chapman of Attleboro, Grace B. Gardner of New Bedford, Henry H. Harris of Lowell, John C. Hull of Leominster, Irving H. Johnson of Newburyport, Frank E. Poland of Malden, and Minnie S. Turner of Somerville. The Federation was now ready to go to work—and how those early members worked!

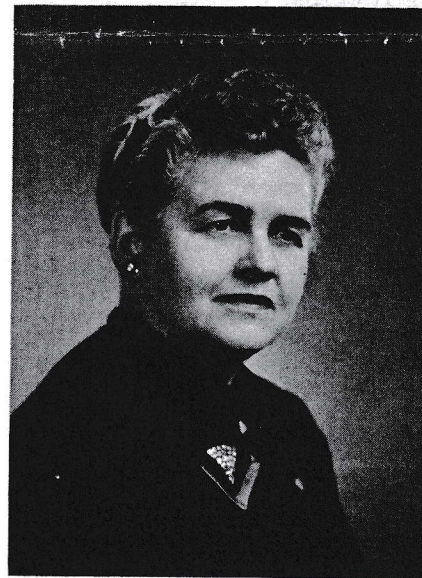
The original eight local associations in the Federation were those of Attleboro, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, New Bedford, Newburyport, and Somerville. The original membership was approximately 1200 teachers, as compared with the 1955 membership of approximately 21,000 teachers in 262 local associations (in addition to which are 10 affiliated county associations and 12 state associations).

The dues at first were \$5 for each affiliated group plus five cents per member for memberships over fifty.

It was all volunteer labor in those days; no office and no clerk even. The early program of the Federation emphasized adequate salaries, establishment of a retirement plan, enactment of a tenure law, and recognition of teachers' views respecting textbooks, courses of study, and rules for conducting the schools.

On March 28, 1913, the Federation was incorporated under the laws of Massachusetts for the following purposes:

"To encourage the organization of local teachers clubs, to bring the various associations of teachers throughout the state into relations of mutual assistance and cooperation, to aid in the establishment of a fraternal feeling among teachers and organizations of teachers, to create a deeper sense of the dignity of the profession and the importance of the interests which it represents, and to act as the agent of teachers



EMILY M. McCORMICK  
President of the MTA

associations in providing opportunities for conferences and union of effort in matters of common interest." How well-expressed and broad a purpose!

### The Original MTA

It is not widely known that when the Massachusetts Teachers Federation was formed in 1911 there was already a Massachusetts Teachers Association made up of a relatively small number of teachers and devoted mostly to the holding of meetings and the publishing of a journal. The original MTA was formed in 1845, and it merged with the MTF as of October 18, 1919.

The original MTA of 1845-1919 had a membership of only a few hundred and was rather closely connected with the State Board of Education. It published a magazine called THE MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER, which was a semi-monthly periodical begun in January 1848, usually sixteen pages in length. (The MTF published a magazine called COMMON GROUND from 1914 to 1931 when the name was changed to THE MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER, starting with the October 1931 issue.)

The original MTA merged with the MTF as a result of discussion in favor of having one organization for the teachers of the state. At a meeting on March 1, 1919, at the Massachusetts School of Art in Boston, the



matter of uniting was discussed by representatives of various state and county teachers associations, and it was voted "That it is the sense of this meeting that as far as possible a state-wide organization should be reached through the medium of the Massachusetts Teachers Federation."

President Robert O. Small of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (a Department of Education official) and Secretary Ernst Makechnie of the Massachusetts Teachers Federation acted as chairman and secretary respectively at this meeting.

The first five presidents of the original MTA were Oliver Carlton of Salem (1845 and 1846); Ariel Parish of Springfield (1847 and 1848); Thomas Sherwin of Boston (1849 and 1850); William H. Wells of Newburyport (1851 and 1852); and Josiah A. Stearns of Boston (1853 and 1854).

### Back to the MTF

Coming back to the Massachusetts Teachers Federation (built upon the basis of cooperation among local teachers associations rather than upon individual memberships), at the annual meeting of the delegates on April 25, 1953, it was voted to change the name of the MTF to Massachusetts Teachers Association, and this change of corporate name became effective June 3, 1953.

Thus, the present MTA of 1955 had its inception as the MTF in 1911, and the original MTA formed in 1845 went out of business in 1919 by merging with the MTF.

The past presidents of the MTF-MTA have been as follows: 1911-15, Ernst Makechnie, Somerville; 1915-19, Henry H. Harris, Lowell; 1919-24, Mary McSkimmon, Brookline; 1924-26, John E. Lynch, Worcester; 1926-31, Annie C. Woodward, Somerville; 1931-32, Edward R. Clarke, Winthrop; 1932-33, Oscar F. Raymond, Brockton; 1933-35, Martin F. O'Connor, Cambridge; 1935-37, Grace I. Woodbury, Melrose; 1937-38, N. Elliot Willis, Winthrop; 1938-39, Anna J. Masterson, Lowell; 1939-40, Everett J. McIntosh, Brookline; 1940-41, Julia E. Sullivan, Boston; 1941-42, Russell V. Burkhard, Newton; 1942-43, Ruth E. Annis, Revere; 1943-44, Carl F. Holloran, Canton; 1944-46, Ethel R. Coleman, Springfield; 1946-47, Raymon W. Eldridge, Brookline; 1947-48, Joanna Z. Connell, Boston; 1948-49, Donald Dike, Athol; 1949-50, Grace A. Buxton, Worcester; 1950-51, J. Turner Hood, Jr., North Reading; 1951-52, Margaret T. C. Murphy, New Bedford; 1952-53, Albert M. Johnson, Springfield; 1953-54, Phyllis L. Devine, Melrose; 1954-55, Edmund K. Fanning, Brockton. Emily M. McCormick of Agawam is the current president of the Association.

### The Staff

After Mr. Makechnie finished as president of the Federation (1911-1915), he became secretary and continued as such until 1924, receiving a small compensation for his part-time services. From September 1, 1924 until August 31, 1930, Stanley R. Oldham was secretary on a half-time basis. Then the Federation did what so many other state associations had already done; it hired a full-time secretary who later was called "executive secretary." Hugh Nixon started work in this capacity on September 1, 1930, and has continued to date.

Other developments followed as services were called for by members. On May 11, 1940, the Board of Directors established a legal service and engaged Attorney William J. O'Keefe to help teachers on their legal problems. On August 1, 1943, a research director was added to the staff. Dr. Herbert Blair served from that date until August 1, 1946, when Fred E. Pitkin took over. A public-relations service was inaugurated on September 1, 1947, under the direction of Doris E.

Almy. The chief clerk, Margaret V. Phaneuf, began full-time service in September 1929.

The office staff as of June, 1955 consisted of seven full-time employees, in addition to whom were six part-time employees teaching in the public schools and an attorney.

Growth continued as existing locals joined in and new locals were formed. The program of the organization grew likewise. A magazine was started in 1914 and appeared under the name of COMMON GROUND until 1931, when the name was changed to THE MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER. The editors were, in succession, Ralph P. Ireland, Stanley R. Oldham, Anne Alfreda Mellish, Alfred F. Burke, and Hugh Nixon.

The first office of the organization was in Mr. Makechnie's home at 238 Elm St., Somerville. From 1922-1941 the Association had offices at 15 Ashburton Place, Boston, and from 1941 until the present has had offices at 14 Beacon Street, Boston, almost opposite the State House.

### Management

The control of the Massachusetts Teachers Association is in the hands of a House of Delegates, selected by the affiliated associations, when it is in session (usually once a year) and in the hands of a Board of Directors elected by the House of Delegates. At present there are 28 members on the Board of Directors including the officers, and the selection of directors (excepting the officers) is based upon membership in the various counties.

Nominations are in the hands of a large committee on which each affiliated association is entitled to one representative. There is an Executive Committee consisting of seven members whose duty is almost exclusively the making of recommendations for consideration by the Board of Directors.

The committees of the organization presently are as follows: Child Welfare, Citizenship, Classroom Teachers Activities, Credentials and Ballot, Future Teachers of America, Industrial Arts, Insurance, Legislation, National Education Association, Nominating, Public Relations, Salaries, School Administration, State Aid, State and County Associations, Teacher Education and Professional Standards.

### More on the Original MTA

Coming back to the original Massachusetts Teachers Association which started in 1845 and merged with the Massachusetts Teachers Federation in 1919, it is interesting to note the following information:

Chapter 213 of the Acts of 1846 read as follows, in part: "Section 1. Oliver Carlton, Samuel Swan, their associates and successors, are hereby made a corporation by the name of the Massachusetts Teachers Association, with all the powers and privileges, and subject to all the duties, liabilities and restrictions, set forth in the forty-fourth chapter of the Revised Statutes; and said corporation may hold real and personal estate to the amount of twenty thousand dollars to be devoted exclusively to the promotion of the interest of education and the improvement of the qualifications of teachers."

The early association's constitution provided that membership should be open to "practical" male teachers upon paying a fee of one dollar. "Practical" female teachers could be honorary members. The seal of the first MTA was a circle around the outer edge of which were the words "Massachusetts Teachers Association, Org. 1845-Inc. 1846." In the center of the circle was a kneeling student and a robed teacher in Grecian garb. The teacher's hand rested on a globe of the world. In the background was a Greek temple of learning from which radiated light.

The annual conventions of the original MTA were held in various cities of the state in November, dur-



ing two days of Thanksgiving Week. Meetings were devoted largely to lectures, demonstrations, and essays. Accommodations for female teachers were provided by the residents of the community, free of expense. Although women teachers were allowed membership and the right to attend meetings, they were expected to be "seen and not heard", but they were encouraged to enter essay contests. Apparently the essays for the women were on different subjects than for the men; the two sexes did not compete, it seems.

The first issue of *THE MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER*, already referred to, was in January 1848. The subscription rate was one dollar a year. Responsibility for securing material for the periodical was divided among a board of directors of fifteen members.

Connected with the early MTA was a Massachusetts Council of Education whose object was "to unify and secure the cooperation of all the educational agencies of the state; to discuss and devise plans for increasing the efficiency of education in the schools of the state; and in harmony with the State Board of Education to promote necessary legislation." (Apparently the MTA and the State Board of Education worked very closely together.)

This Council included the president of the MTA and the secretary of the State Board of Education, ex-officio; twenty-four delegates from the MTA; five delegates from the New England Association of Colleges; five delegates from the Massachusetts School Superintendents Association; three delegates each from the New England Normal Council, the High School Masters Club, the Boston Association of School Principals, the Boston Teachers Club, and the Harvard Teachers Association; one delegate each from the various county associations,—the total membership of the Council not to exceed one hundred, however.

The early MTA and the county associations were closely connected with one another and held two-day

conventions in the Commonwealth as well as teachers institutes, which had been initiated by Horace Mann, first secretary of the State Board of Education.

### National Education Association

*THE MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER* of May 1857 gave notice of the formation of the National Teachers Association (now the National Education Association) in the following words: "The especial attention of Massachusetts teachers is invited to the following circular. It is proper to state that the association proposed is not designed to trench upon ground already occupied by existing associations. The National Teachers Association is designed to be purely a professional teachers organization and in this respect will differ from all educational bodies heretofore created in the United States. As Massachusetts has always been in the van of educational progress, it is hoped that her teachers will promptly and cordially cooperate with their fellow teachers of other states in giving success to this new enterprise. The association will meet in the Controller's rooms in the Athenaeum Building, corner of South Sixth Street and Adelphi Street, Philadelphia, August 26, at 9 a.m." (D. B. Hagar, May 15, 1857.)

D. B. Hagar, mentioned above in connection with the formation of the NEA, was the sixth president of the first MTA, and his name loomed large in the formation of the national organization; in fact, Mr. Hagar was in 1857 placed on a committee of three persons to draft a constitution for the National Teachers Association.

Thus, we have an interesting account of how an MTA formed in 1845, and publisher of *THE MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER*, joined in 1919 with an MTF formed in 1911, and publisher of *COMMON GROUND*, later to change its name to Massachusetts Teachers Association and its publication to *THE MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER*.

*[The information above was gathered by Hugh Nixon, executive secretary, and Doris E. Almy, director of professional relations, with the assistance of the Massachusetts Department of Education and the State House Library.]*



The MTA office staff. **Front row (left to right)**, Fred E. Pitkin, director of research; Doris E. Almy, director of professional relations; Hugh Nixon, executive secretary and editor. **Back row (left to right)**, Alice Emerson, secretary to Miss Almy; Elaine F. Bayek, secretary to Mr. Pitkin; Barbara R. Greenwood, assistant to the executive secretary; Margaret V. Phaneuf, chief clerk.



ing two days of Thanksgiving Week. Meetings were devoted largely to lectures, demonstrations, and essays. Accommodations for female teachers were provided by the residents of the community, free of expense. Although women teachers were allowed membership and the right to attend meetings, they were expected to be "seen and not heard", but they were encouraged to enter essay contests. Apparently the essays for the women were on different subjects than for the men; the two sexes did not compete, it seems.

The first issue of *THE MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER*, already referred to, was in January 1848. The subscription rate was one dollar a year. Responsibility for securing material for the periodical was divided among a board of directors of fifteen members.

Connected with the early MTA was a Massachusetts Council of Education whose object was "to unify and secure the cooperation of all the educational agencies of the state; to discuss and devise plans for increasing the efficiency of education in the schools of the state; and in harmony with the State Board of Education to promote necessary legislation." (Apparently the MTA and the State Board of Education worked very closely together.)

This Council included the president of the MTA and the secretary of the State Board of Education, ex-officio; twenty-four delegates from the MTA; five delegates from the New England Association of Colleges; five delegates from the Massachusetts School Superintendents Association; three delegates each from the New England Normal Council, the High School Masters Club, the Boston Association of School Principals, the Boston Teachers Club, and the Harvard Teachers Association; one delegate each from the various county associations,—the total membership of the Council not to exceed one hundred, however.

The early MTA and the county associations were closely connected with one another and held two-day

conventions in the Commonwealth as well as teachers institutes, which had been initiated by Horace Mann, first secretary of the State Board of Education.

### National Education Association

*THE MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER* of May 1857 gave notice of the formation of the National Teachers Association (now the National Education Association) in the following words: "The especial attention of Massachusetts teachers is invited to the following circular. It is proper to state that the association proposed is not designed to trench upon ground already occupied by existing associations. The National Teachers Association is designed to be purely a professional teachers organization and in this respect will differ from all educational bodies heretofore created in the United States. As Massachusetts has always been in the van of educational progress, it is hoped that her teachers will promptly and cordially cooperate with their fellow teachers of other states in giving success to this new enterprise. The association will meet in the Controller's rooms in the Athenaeum Building, corner of South Sixth Street and Adelphi Street, Philadelphia, August 26, at 9 a.m." (D. B. Hagar, May 15, 1857.)

D. B. Hagar, mentioned above in connection with the formation of the NEA, was the sixth president of the first MTA, and his name loomed large in the formation of the national organization; in fact, Mr. Hagar was in 1857 placed on a committee of three persons to draft a constitution for the National Teachers Association.

Thus, we have an interesting account of how an MTA formed in 1845, and publisher of *THE MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER*, joined in 1919 with an MTF formed in 1911, and publisher of *COMMON GROUND*, later to change its name to Massachusetts Teachers Association and its publication to *THE MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER*.

*[The information above was gathered by Hugh Nixon, executive secretary, and Doris E. Almy, director of professional relations, with the assistance of the Massachusetts Department of Education and the State House Library.]*



The MTA office staff. **Front row (left to right)**, Fred E. Pitkin, director of research; Doris E. Almy, director of professional relations; Hugh Nixon, executive secretary and editor. **Back row (left to right)**, Alice Emerson, secretary to Miss Almy; Elaine F. Bayek, secretary to Mr. Pitkin; Barbara R. Greenwood, assistant to the executive secretary; Margaret V. Phaneuf, chief clerk.

# **Constitution of the Massachusetts Teachers Association**

## **ARTICLE II**

### **Objects**

The objects of the Association are:

1. To encourage the organization of local teachers' clubs.
2. To bring the various associations of teachers throughout the state into relations of mutual assistance and cooperation.
3. To aid in the establishment of a fraternal feeling among teachers and organizations of teachers.
4. To create a deeper sense of dignity of the profession and the importance of the interests which it represents.
5. To act as the agent of teachers' associations in providing opportunities for conferences and union of effort in matters of common interest.
6. To increase the efficiency of education as a public service in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.