

PMTA History by Millie Ault



A predecessor of the present Pennsylvania MTA was founded at the close of MTNA's thirteenth annual meeting in Philadelphia, on July 5, 1889. Seventeen "earnest music teachers of Pennsylvania" met at the call of Joseph H. Gittings of Pittsburgh, but Theodore H. Presser was elected temporary chairman. The newly formed organization, taking the name of Pennsylvania State Music Teachers Association, elected William Wolsieffer its president and made plans for its first state convention, to be held in Philadelphia during the Christmas holidays of 1889.

Records of eight annual meetings are available, extending to that of 1896. At the fourth meeting, held in Reading in 1892, the Association imported a large orchestra from Philadelphia, was able to cover its costs through the sale of tickets to the general public, and yet emerged with a cash surplus of \$625.52. The fifth meeting, at Scranton in 1893, again presented an orchestra; and a concert containing the music of seventeen Pennsylvania composers was "a pronounced feature of a very gratifying nature." Thereafter, each annual meeting showed a declining cash surplus; the meeting of 1896, at which Thomas à Becket (who was to be MTNA's president in 1904) was elected president, is the last for which records are known.

Discussions leading to the formation of the present Pennsylvania Music Teachers Association were begun by a group of the state's teachers at the MTNA Cleveland convention of 1940, but definitive action was delayed. Eight years later, at Chicago, discussions were resumed under the leadership of F.A. Diefenthaler and Arzella Huntsberger; Leroy B. Campbell was appointed temporary president, and planning continued. The Association was formally established and the first slate of officers elected during the MTNA convention of 1950 at Washington; James Francis Cooke was elected president.

PMTA enjoyed a rapid growth in membership in the following years, and became affiliated with MTNA in 1953.

In 1957 the state was divided into seven districts, each with its own appointed chairman. Local organizations of teachers (in Pittsburgh, Reading, etc.) were organized, this action contributing largely to the success of a membership recruitment drive. Certification had been an item of concern as early as 1954, but was officially approved at the PMTA convention of 1959. PMTA has participated actively in the Student Auditions programs at all levels, and since 1969 has contributed several Eastern divisional as well as four national competition winners in various categories.



Pennsylvania Music Teachers Association
The First Fifty Years
*A birds eye view of convention sites, board meetings,
conferences from records found in the archive.*

1950-1960

The possibility of forming a Pennsylvania Music Teachers Association was seriously discussed by a group of music teachers from Pennsylvania at the 1940 MTNA Convention in Cleveland. No action was taken at that time due to world conditions.

Organization was begun in December 1948 at the MTNA Convention in Chicago. Initiating the effort were F.A. Diefenthaler, National Committee Chairman, Arzella Huntsberger, President of Pittsburgh Piano Teachers Association, and Lewis Howell of Philadelphia.

Election of state officers took place during the 1950 MTNA Convention in Washington D.C.

President	- Dr. James Francis Cooke, Philadelphia
First VP	- Elizabeth Pommer Shields, Philadelphia
Second VP	- Dr. Leroy Campbell, Warren
Cor. Secry.	- Lewis Howell, Philadelphia
Rec.Sec.	- Earl Truxell, Pittsburgh
Treasurer	- Arzella Huntsberger, Pittsburgh

1952 - The First Annual Conference was held in Pittsburgh

1953 - Conference held in Philadelphia at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel. President was Dallmeyer Russell.

1955 - Conference held in Johnstown, the first in a mall city. Present at this meeting was one of the founders, Lewis Howell.

1957 - The Seventh Conference was held in Reading, Hotel Berkshire. Stanley Sprenger, President.

1959 - Conference at Pittsburgh. Stanley Sprenger, President.

1960 - Board meeting in Philadelphia. President Stanley Sprenger. Announced 250 members representing 42 counties were recorded. 23 counties had no representation. The two leading counties were Allegheny and Philadelphia.

1960-1970

1961 - Board meeting in Reading, Lloyd Ultan, President. A scholarship program was discussed. A journal would be published to be of value to members. A certification program to be recognized by the state was discussed. An insurance program was to be considered.

1962 - Board meeting in Reading. Miriam Heisler, President. Certification discussions continued and tentative action was taken to organize member -- Active, Associate, Honorary and Student Membership was established. This allowed PMTA to become a unit of Eastern Division/MTNA.

1963 - Board meeting in Pittsburgh. Arnold Fletcher, President. Eleven persons present at this meeting.

1964 - Arnold Fletcher, President

1965 - Convention in Harrisburg. Gerald Keenan, President.

1966 - Clement Petrillo, President. No records available.

1967 - Convention held in Harrisburg. Donald Chittum, President. Executive Committee met at Temple University from 1967-1970 with Donald Chittum as President. Work was ongoing to set up District and Local Chapters.

1968 - Six Districts were established with Local Chapters established in each as membership allowed. Membership in each District at that time: Northeast 13, Southeast 91, Students 37. National Certification would be granted to applicants only if they held a degree in music. Up to this time, certification was granted to teacher members under the grandfather clause. The grandfather clause was deleted for certification after 1969. The Constitution was rewritten and approved in meetings in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

In 1968, an award was presented to two members who had served the organization in an outstanding degree in its earlier years. Dallmeyer Russell and Arzella Huntsberger both of Pittsburgh.

1969 - President Donald Chittum announced from PA Competition winners: Peter Orth, High School piano, student of Benjamin Whitten. Peter continued on to Eastern Division, declared a winner there and continued on to the National Competition where was declared the winner. Other winners from PA to Eastern Division were: Frank Richmond, College piano, student of Earl Wild; and Robert Calvert, College voice, student of Beatrice Krebs.

At the 1969 Board meeting, membership was recorded at 278 members, 10 local organizations with 88 members receiving certification from PTMA-MTNA.

The 1969 Service Award was presented to Dr. David Stone.

1970 - Service award went to Rosalie Talone. Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award was presented to Benjamin Whitten, West Chester. By membership vote a PMTA Service Award and Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award would be presented annually.

1970-1980

1970 - Convention at Williamsport, Donald Chittum, President.

1971 - Convention at Chambersburg where John Harrison was elected President. Officers elected with him included: Frank Chesebro, Certification; Donald Chittum, Membership; Benjamin Whitten, Student Activities; Eileen Gregg, Publications. Announced membership 290 members with 189 holding PMTA-MTNA certification. Districts held Bartok Festivals statewide using materials from The Mikrokosmos Books 1 through 6. One local chapter (Lancaster) held a multi-piano festival. Proceeds used to award four scholarship to a local music camp.

1972 - Board meeting held at Elizabethtown College. Convention held in Harrisburg Host Hotel. John Harrison, President. Membership recorded at 311 members.

1973 - Committee at work in Philadelphia with Lilburn Dunlap, President, on areas of constitution revision and certification.

1974 - Convention at Philadelphia Community College, Lilburn Dunlap, President. It was decided to hold board meetings at convention sites prior to the convention.

1975 - Convention at Penn State with Benjamin Whitten President.

1976 - Convention at Marywood College, Scranton. Benjamin Whitten, President.

1977 - Convention held at Villa Maria College, Benjamin Whitten, President.

1978 - The 21st Convention held in Bethlehem, Benjamin Whitten, President. The first student festival was held to help increase monies in the treasury. Ray Cramer was elected President.

1979 - Convention held in Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Ray Cramer, President.

1980 - Convention held at Millersville University with Ray Cramer serving as President. It was here that a Renaissance Feast was served to the membership with music and entertain enjoyed enthusiastically by all.