

# Digging up the History of Our Section



**BETTY MAYFIELD  
JON SCOTT**

**MD-DC-VA SECTION MEETING  
APRIL 14, 2012**

# The Centennial of the MAA



- 1894: *American Mathematical Monthly* founded by Benjamin Finkel, a schoolteacher in Missouri
- 1915: American Mathematical Society declined to take on responsibility of publishing the *Monthly*
- December 30-31, 1915: E.R. Hedrick of the University of Missouri presided over a meeting of 104 people. The result: the Mathematical Association of America

# MathFest 2015



- Meet in Washington, DC – in our Section!
- Celebrate the Centennial
- Special program
- One day longer than usual
- Combined with Bridges Conference: art and mathematics

# Section History



- Each Section will write a history for the MAA Centennial
- Our Section has its own centennial coming up
- How will we celebrate?

# Section History Committee



- Jon Scott, Montgomery College, Chair
- Betty Mayfield, Hood College
- Caren Diefenderfer, Hollins University
- Bud Brown, Virginia Tech
- Chris Barat, Stevenson University
- Mary Kay Abbey, Montgomery College
- Dan Symancyk, Anne Arundel Community College
- *Howard Penn, U.S. Naval Academy*

# History of the MD-DC-VA Section



- What we have done so far
- What we have learned
- Plans for the future

## An early Section of the MAA



- During the meeting of the Council of the Association at Columbia University in December, 1916, a section of the Association was established for Maryland and the District of Columbia, with the possible inclusion of Virginia.
- The authority being granted by the council, arrangements were completed for a meeting to organize the Section at Johns Hopkins University on March 3, 1917.
- (So do we date our beginning from 1916 or 1917??)

# The Work of the Committee So Far



- Meet in person at Section meetings
- Meet virtually via email
- Sort through boxes of documents
- Read old *Monthlys* for news of the Section
- Catalog, scan, file



# Musty old documents: Every Section has The Cardboard Box



- Newsletters
- Announcements, programs, abstracts from meetings
- Minutes
- Financial reports
- Correspondence
- Annual reports
- Lists of institutional reps/liaisons, Section officers
- Descriptions of summer workshops

# Meeting programs



- *Earliest paper copy so far*: December 1955
- One-day meeting (Saturday)
- Catholic University
- Six contributed talks
- Invited talk by John W. Wrench: “The Evolution of Extended Decimal Approximations to  $\pi$  and  $e$ .”
- Lunch at university dining hall cost \$1
- Members were also invited to attend “the Christmas meeting of NCTM” in DC

# Joint meetings with other associations



- **Spring 1957 with SIAM, at Johns Hopkins**  
Lots of talks in sessions of both associations by people from government/industry
- **Spring 1984 with AMS, at Virginia Commonwealth University**  
Joint MAA/AMS Friday night banquet address by Tom Banchoff (followed by a “beer party”)
- **Spring 1995 with VMATYC at Thomas Nelson Community College**  
Friday night program at Va. Air & Space Museum

# Conflict!

\*\*\*\*\* Your own Section is an active one because of the high school contest which you are sponsoring. In this connection, I should like to request your Section and the contest committee to refrain from soliciting for the contest outside the boundaries of your Section. By all means, avoid any solicitation of funds in the State of New York or from companies having headquarters in New York State. The Tompkins Act of New York State forbids such solicitation. Also, the Board of Governors has voted that all such requests for funds should be made through the office of the Secretary-Treasurer upon authorization of the Board of Governors or of the Executive and Finance Committee. At one time in the past, the Chairman of two different committees approached one of the foundations for funds. The board of Governors felt that this duplication of requests made it easy for the foundation to refuse to make grants to either committee.

yours,

sgd. Harry

Harry M. Gehmen  
Secretary-Treasurer

# Our disturbing past



- Spring 1958 meeting
- Randolph-Macon Woman's College
- Lynchburg, VA
- Meeting announcement:
- Bus lines: Trailways or Greyhound
- Railroads: Southern or Norfolk & Western
- Lodging at local hotels/motels: \$4.50 – \$8

# Letter



- From Gweneth Humphreys (RMWC)
- To D.B. Lloyd (District of Columbia Teachers College)

Dear Professor Lloyd:

I have been unable to find any way to arrange for a luncheon for our meeting here which does not require reservations beforehand. We can arrange for a buffet lunch (for negroes as well as whites) on the campus at \$1.50. The meal should be very good and having it on campus would be convenient for those attending the meeting. However, I must be able to give the number pretty accurately by Friday, April 25. There are not many places to eat near the campus — two drug stores and the restaurant which is the one which will cater for the meal on campus. None of these will serve negroes on their premises I believe. If the notice of the meeting had a piece on it to be filled out for a reservation and mailed to me, do you think there would be any objection? I take it the section cannot afford to send stamped addressed postcards. If, however, cards could be supplied, I could have them addressed and printed here in our stenographic bureau. How many members do we have altogether? Reservations should reach me by April 24th.

*Highlights of History of Our Section*  
Compiled: 1970, Editor Unknown  
(Does anyone know who did this work??)



- During the meeting of the Council of the Association at Columbia University in December, 1916, a section of the Association was established for Maryland and the District of Columbia, with the possible inclusion of Virginia.
- The authority being granted by the council, arrangements were completed for a meeting to organize the Section at Johns Hopkins University on March 3, 1917.
- On May 7, 1921 the Section met in the Drafting Hall of the U. S. Capitol, under the auspices of the Coast and Geodetic Survey and the International (Canadian) Boundary Commission. Action was taken authorizing the secretary-treasurer to prepare an amendment to the constitution giving Virginia representation on the executive committee.
- At the tenth regular meeting, held at the Johns Hopkins University on December 10, 1921 there were 44 attending, 50 members. An amendment increased the membership of the executive committee from 3 to 4 in order that Washington, Baltimore, Annapolis, and the state of Virginia might each have a representative on this committee. A resolution passed welcoming papers from any of its members and asking the members to send abstracts in advance of the May and December meetings. (A comment by the Monthly editor suggests that the resolution is impractical.)



# *Interesting Talks at Section Meetings*

(from the same document)



- "Calculation of the Date of Easter," by F. D. Murnaghan, 1919.
- "Proof that in a plane world infinite in extent, but finite in thickness, gravity would be a constant at any altitude," by H. S. Hawnesworth, 1919.
- "Mathematics of a warped airplane wing," by J. B. Scarborough, 1925.
- "A laboratory course in mathematics," by R. E. Root, 1924, in which he indicated that the construction of alignment charts are peculiarly suitable for laboratory exercises.
- "The Byrd polar flight," by H. G. Avers, 1926, in which he discussed the scientific preparation for the flight, the methods of taking observations during the flight, and the computation to determine when Byrd was exactly over the pole.
- "Difference equations and differential equations" by Richard Courant of Gottingen, 1932.

## Interesting Items from the *Monthly*



### *Historic firsts:*

- The first Section meeting: Johns Hopkins University, Organizational meeting, March 3, 1917
- The first meeting at a women's college: Goucher College, May 15, 1920
- The first meeting at a non-academic site: Drafting Hall of U.S. Capitol, May 7, 1921
- The first meeting at HBCU: Howard University, December 6, 1952

# *Early participation of women*



- Lillian Brown, Hood College; charter member
- Clara Bacon, Goucher College; speaker 1917; executive committee, 1919; chairman, 1930
- Clara Smith, ??, speaker, 1919 *Do you know her?*
- Florence Lewis, Goucher College; speaker, 1919; executive committee, 1923, 1929, 1938, 1941
- Gillie Larew, Randolph-Macon Woman's College; executive committee, 1931; chairman, 1937; governor, 1945

## Selected highlights/observations from early meetings:



- Papers at first meeting (JHU, 1917): “The Aims and Possibilities of this Local Section” and “A College or University Course for Teachers of Secondary Mathematics”.
- In 1930, the Section decided to abandon the custom of providing a free luncheon for those attending the meeting.

# Plans for the future



- Interview long-time members
- Write brief biographies of members who are no longer with us
  - John M. Smith Award for Distinguished College or University Teaching
  - John G. Milcetic Memorial Student Achievement Fund
- Electronic repository: Section website and blog



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## About The Maryland-District of Columbia-Virginia Section

The Mathematical Association of America is the largest professional society of college and university mathematics teachers in the world, with 30,000 members. The Maryland-District of Columbia- Virginia Section is the regional affiliate of the national organization, and has 1,900 members. The Section has two meetings a year: the Fall meeting is usually held in November, the Spring meeting in April.

## Section History

The following is taken from *The Mathematical Association of America: Its First Fifty Years*, Kenneth O. May, editor, 1972, pages 86-87.

### 1916 MARYLAND-VIRGINIA-DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The triple-named Section was authorized at the December 1916 meeting of the Association, and the organizational meeting was held March 3, 1917 at Johns Hopkins University. Twenty-three of the thirty-eight persons present were members of the Association. One of the two papers presented considered "The aims and possibilities of this local section." The other covered "A college or university course for teachers of secondary mathematics." One would infer that the new Section was to concern itself with education of mathematics teachers, as well as the subject of mathematics itself. Professor Abraham Cohen of the host institution was elected the first President [MONTHLY 24, 223-224].

The Section constitution provided for at least two meetings a year, in the fall and spring. In reviewing the records of these meetings, certain discussions command attention. For example, in December 1922 there was an exposition and criticism of the plan of reorganization of secondary school mathematics drawn up by the National Committee on Mathematical Requirements. The suggestion of calculus as a senior high school elective was approved but "with the accompanying expression of serious doubt of the likelihood of early adoption."

An unusual treat for the Section at its December 1931 meeting at the U. S. Naval Academy was a trip to the Library at St. John's College where an exhibit of some rare books on mathematics and related subjects had been arranged. Some of the most noteworthy were: Luca de Borgo Pacioli, *Divina Proportione* (Venice 1509), Colin Maclaurin, *Newton's Philosophical Discourses* (5th Ed., 1794), Robert Boyle, *Flame, Air and Explosives* (London 1712), and vol. I of Ozanom's *Mathematical Course* (London 1712).

The speakers at the Section meetings have included many persons from government bureaus, as would be expected. The papers tend to be more technical than in some other Sections.

Firefox

MD-DC-VA Section History: Welcome to... +

mddcvasectionhistory.blogspot.com/2011/12/welcome-to-mddcva-section-of-maa.html

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# MD-DC-VA Section History


This blog is for members of the MD-DC-VA Section of the MAA to post information and stories about section meetings, summer workshops, people, newsletters and institutions.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2011

## Welcome to the MD-DC-VA Section of the MAA History Blog

This blog is for members of the MD-DC-VA Section of the MAA to post information and stories about section meetings, summer workshops, people, newsletters and institutions.

Posted by Don Spickler at 10:24 AM

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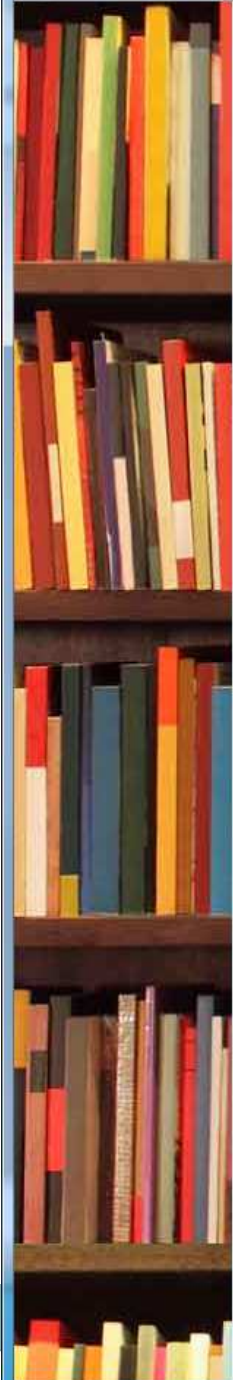
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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2011

## Stories

Please submit any stories about the section, its members or meetings that you think other members would find of interest.

Posted by Don Spickler at 11:19 AM [0 comments](#)





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## Newsletters

Please submit information about past section newsletters. We are currently creating an archive of past newsletters and there are some holes we would like to fill. You can find the current archive at [MD-DC-VA Newsletter Archive](#).

Posted by Don Spickler at 11:17 AM [0 comments](#)





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## People

Please submit information on past section meeting speakers, officers, students and student activities, and faculty members that you think other members would find of interest.

Posted by Don Spickler at 11:11 AM [0 comments](#)





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## Summer Workshops

Please submit information about past summer workshops offered through the section.

Posted by Don Spickler at 11:01 AM [0 comments](#)





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## Meetings

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# How can you help?



- Contribute to the history blog
- Offer to interview or be interviewed
- Look for old documents – at home, at the office
- Help design the Section Flag!
- Come to MathFest 2015
- Send ideas for celebrating our Section's centennial