MAA's 75th Anniversary

Had one vote been cast differently, we would not be celebrating in August of 1990 the 75th anniversary of the Mathematical Association of America. There probably would have been no MAA.

The Founding of the MAA

It all started in 1894 when Benjamin Finkel, who had taught in high school in Ohio and Tennessee, started publishing *The American Mathematical Monthly*, aimed primarily at a high school audience, but subsequently expanded to include undergraduates and their teachers. Finkel, who later taught at Drury College in Missouri, solicited for his enterprise some distinguished university faculty: G. B. Halsted of Texas, E. H. Moore of Chicago, and W. E. Byerly of Harvard. The first issue contained an article by Leonard Eugene Dickson, then a 19-year old graduate student at Texas. Eventually he persuaded Dickson (by then at Chicago) and Herbert Ellsworth Slaught at Chicago to become associate editors, along with G. A. Miller of the University of Illinois. The *Monthly* continued to appear, though on a rather shaky financial foundation, until 1912, when additional support was obtained from a number of other colleges and universities, primarily in the Midwest.

In an attempt to arrange for more stable and permanent support for the *Monthly*, Slaught proposed assistance from the American Mathematical Society, which noted in the minutes of the Council "a communication from Professor Slaught suggesting the appointment by the Council of a Committee to consider the general relation of the Society to the promotion of teaching, especially in the collegiate field." Such a committee was appointed and consisted of Thomas Scott Fiske, Henry Burchard Fine, Earle Raymond Hedrick, William Fogg Osgood and Slaught.

At the April 1915 meeting of the Council, the Committee reported that by a vote of three to two it had decided to recommend that the American Mathematical Society "should not undertake nor become responsible for the publication of the *Monthly*", a decision in which the Council concurred. It is interesting to note, however, that the Council did adopt the following resolution: "It is deemed unwise for the American Mathematical Society to enter into the activities of the special field now covered by the *American Mathematical Monthly*; but the Council desires to express its realization of the importance of the work in this field and its value to mathematical science, and to say that should an organization be formed to deal specifically with this work, the Society would entertain toward such an organization only feelings of hearty good will and encouragement."

So with the Committee vote and the decision of the Council to accept the Committee's recommendation, the stage was set for the forming of a new organization to provide a home for the *Monthly*. Slaught sent out a letter soliciting interest in a new organization and a surprising 450, representing every state in the Union, the District of Columbia and Canada, responded by signing the call to an organizational meeting.

This meeting was held in Room 101, Page Hall, on the campus of The Ohio State University in Columbus, December 30-31, 1915. The setting was a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Slaught delivered the opening remarks. He talked about the history of the *Monthly* and "emphasized the fact that this journal had stood consistently, since its reorganization, for advancing the interests of mathematics in the collegiate and advanced secondary fields, and expressed the hope that the new organization might carry forward these aims with still greater effectiveness, coöperating, on the one hand, with the various well-organized secondary associations, and the other hand, with the American Mathematical Society in its chosen field of scientific research, but being careful to encroach upon neither of these fields."

Hedrick presided at the meeting. There were 104 people attending, of whom 49 were from large universities, 43 from mainly undergraduate institutions, and six from high schools. W. D. Cairns of Oberlin College was the temporary secretary. All the business of organizing the Association was completed in one three-hour session, except for one very difficult issue: the choice of a name. That took a committee of three to sort through eighteen proposals. The choice of "Mathematical Association of America" was unanimous.

Hedrick was chosen as the first President, E. V. Huntington of Harvard and G. A. Miller of Illinois as Vice Presidents, and Cairns as Secretary-Treasurer. Hedrick later became the 20th President of the American Mathematical Society (1929-1930). Cairns was to serve as Secretary-Treasurer until 1943, a record for the position, but not a match for the record of Finkel, who served for 19 years as Editor of the *Monthly* and another 21 years as Associate Editor. Cairns became President of the MAA in 1943.

There was no formal program for that first meeting, but L. C. Karpinski of the University of Michigan gave an illustrated lecture on "The Story of Algebra." Cairns reported that "it is not too much to say that for the space of an hour he both charmed and edified an enthusiastic audience of approximately one hundred persons."

Three sections had been organized prior to the December meeting in Columbus, those of Kansas, Missouri, and Ohio. Clearly the sectional structure of the Association was not an afterthought.

Founded at the beginning of the First World War, the Association claimed 1100 members by the end of the war three years later. In 1920 the MAA was incorporated in the State of Illinois.

The issues before the Association in the days before and shortly after its founding do not sound much different from many of the issues today. Should a course in mathematics be required for graduation? Should calculus be taught in the freshman year? (W. F. Osgood thought that it should be.) Should the United States go on the metric system? Should the same course be taught to future mathematicians and scientists as to other students? Should separate courses in different areas be taught, or should they be replaced by an integrated course? Committees were formed to study these questions and reports were duly submitted and distributed.

The Association has come a long way from the three sections and the 104 people attending the organizational meeting in Columbus to twenty-nine sections with almost 28,000 members today. With the publication of three journals, a newsletter, and a number of series of books and monographs, along with national and sectional meetings and many other activities, the Association is a widely felt force in mathematics and mathematics education.

The Anniversary Celebration in Columbus

To celebrate the accomplishments and the growth of the Association over the past 75 years, the MAA is planning a special meeting in Columbus in August 1990. One day will be devoted entirely to the MAA, the rest of the days resembling more closely regular joint meetings of the MAA and the AMS. Even on these other days, however, the main invited talks will be to a great extent jointly sponsored by the Association and ten of the sibling organizations with which the MAA works. These are (listed in order of their founding): the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Mathematical Society, Pi Mu Epsilon, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the Canadian Mathematical Society, the Association for Computing Machinery, the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics, the National Association of Mathematicians, the Association for Women in Mathematics, and the American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges.

On the opening day of the meetings, following an opening ceremony, there will be addresses in the morning by Judith V. Grabiner (Pitzer College), the noted historian of mathematics, and G. Baley Price (University of Kansas), President of the MAA, 1957-58. There will also be a ceremony to

dedicate two plaques, one to be placed outside Room 101, Page Hall, commemorating the first MAA meeting, and one in the building housing the Mathematics Department at Ohio State. Following lunch, there will be a series of half-hour talks by Wade Ellis, Jr. (West Valley College), Paul R. Halmos (Santa Clara University), Peter Hilton (SUNY at Binghamton), and Cathleen Morawetz (Courant Institute). An entertaining discussion and display of juggling, magic and music will follow, featuring Ron Graham (who will also be delivering Pi Mu Epsilon's J. Sutherland Frame Lecture) and Joe Buhler, among others. That evening there will be a banquet with featured speaker David P. Roselle, President of the University of Kentucky and former Secretary of the Association.

The ten joint invited addresses alluded to earlier will be interspersed among the three remaining days of the meetings. The Earle Raymond Hedrick lectures will be given by Philip J. Davis of Brown University. Further, there will be minicourses, sessions for contributed papers, invited addresses of the American Mathematical Society and Pi Mu Epsilon, and special events associated with the Year of National Dialogue.

Additional events include a talk on mathematical sculpture by Helaman Ferguson on August 9, and a talk and demonstration of calculating skills by Arthur Benjamin of Harvey Mudd College. On the evening prior to the full day of MAA activities, there will be a reception for 25-year members of the Association.

Columbus is an attractive city of nearly 600,000 people and the Ohio State campus, where the meetings will be held, has the largest student population of any one campus in the United States, roughly 54,000. The university, approximately two miles north of the center of Columbus, is connected by frequent city bus service to downtown and nearby areas of interest. In downtown Columbus are the State Capitol, the Center of Science and Industry and the Columbus Museum of Art. The latter houses an outstanding collection of American art as well as good collections of other art as well.

Special efforts are being made to make the Columbus meetings attractive to families. Columbus offers many attractions for children: Ohio Village, the Columbus Zoo, the Wyandotte Lake amusement park, the Center of Science and Industry mentioned above, among others. Just south of downtown Columbus is an extensive area called German Village, a part of the city settled in the 1840's and restored since the 1960's. It is a charming district filled with old brick houses and businesses on tree lined streets, with bookstores, craft galleries, restaurants and outdoor beer gardens. German Village is good for hours of strolling and browsing. Picnic and hiking opportunities abound in eight, large metropolitan parks which ring Columbus, and at Hocking Hills State Park, about 45 miles south of Columbus. Several pools inside the Ohio State Natatorium and large, public beaches at two reservoirs

north of Columbus provide excellent swimming.

Make plans now to join the MAA in celebrating its 75th anniversary next summer in Columbus, Ohio, August 8-11.