History of the Seaway Section 1940 to the Present

CHAPTER 1
A GLIMPSE AT THE BEGINNINGS OF MAA

A Comprehensive account of the events leading up to the founding of MAA was published in 1972 by the Association, The Mathematical Association of America – Its First Fifty Years, by Kenneth O. May of the University of Toronto as editor. (The quotations below are taken from this book.) For purposes of this report, suffice it to say that professional mathematical societies in this country developed by and large from the New York Mathematical Society which was founded in 1888. It expanded into a nationwide organization in 1891, and three years later was reorganized as the American Mathematical Society.

At about the same time, Benjamin F. Finkel founded The American Mathematical Monthly. This journal was directed toward the improvement of mathematics teaching. From its beginnings, the MONTHLY had financial problems and had to seek support and subsidies from many institutions and individuals. By 1913, an editorial board had been organized consisting of Finkel and representatives of eleven supporting colleges.

In 1914, a communication from Professor H. E. Slaught (a graduate of Colgate University) to the Council of the American Mathematical Society suggested the appointment of a Committee to consider the general relation of the Society to the promotion of teaching especially in the collegiate field. Such Committee was appointed, and later reported that it had voted three to two that the Society should not take over publication of the MONTHLY, and “it is deemed unwise for the American Mathematical Society to enter into the activities of the special field now covered by the MONTHLY.” However, the Committee recognized the importance of work in this field, adding that its value suggests that an organization should be formed to deal specifically with this topic. Slaught, then managing editor of the MONTHLY circulated a letter asking support for the establishment of such an association. As a result, an organizational meeting was called for December of 1915 at Ohio State University, and The Mathematical Association of America came into existence with the MONTHLY as its official journal.

In December of 1915, representatives of Kansas, Missouri and Ohio applied to the newly formed MAA to become Sections, in accordance with the Constitution of MAA. Thus, “some sections were informally organized and held meetings before formal approval by the Association.” (In fact, the Kansas Section grew out of a Kansas Association of Mathematics Teachers, founded in 1905.)

Despite New York’s being one of the original thirteen states of the United States, its mathematicians were somewhat slow in becoming affiliated with The Mathematical Association of America. (After reviewing the manuscript of the fifty-year history of MAA mentioned above, Dirk Struik is quoted as having written “The whole early MONTHLY and MAA movement seems to have been strongly Midwest. What was the reason? Eastern snootiness? Or just a fresh prairie wind blowing over the grassroots country?”) In time, however, the “movement” spread throughout the country as various Sections were organized. The MAA has grown into an international mathematical organization with some 29 Sections.
CHAPTER II
THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF MAA

The governance of MAA originally was the responsibility of The Executive Council, a precursor of the Board of Trustees. Four members of the Council were elected annually for a term of three years. The Council consisted of twelve members, together with the officers of the MAA. (These were apparently elected by the general membership.) When the MAA was incorporated in 1920 under the statutes of the State of Illinois, the affairs of the Association were placed in the hands of a Board of Trustees, originally consisting of H. E. Slaught, E. R. Hedrick, and W. D. Cairns. The Board was soon expanded to 19 members, including the officers of MAA. In December of 1939, the Board of Trustees was replaced by the Board of Governors. Regions of MAA were established and Regional Governors were elected by their constituencies. In 1945, action was taken by the Board of Governors to do away with the Regions and to provide for the election of a Governor from each Section of the Association. It was also suggested that since there were no Sections in New England or in eastern Canada, special arrangements might be made to have Governors elected from these areas. This may explain why and how the Upper New York State Section came to include Canadian MAA members who reside in Quebec and Eastern Ontario.

The following people have represented the Seaway Section on the Board of Governors of the MAA during its fifty year history. (There was no Governor from 1940 to 1949.)

CHAPTER III
THE UPPER NEW YORK STATE SECTION OF THE MATHEMATICAL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA—A 25 year history: 1940-1965

For a number of years prior to 1940 the departments of mathematics at Syracuse, Hamilton, and Colgate met twice yearly for a Saturday afternoon meeting followed by dinner. Professor Walter B. Carver, president of the M.A.A. during 1939-40, sometime in the fall of 1939 sent letters to many Association members in New York State in order to learn what the general sentiment was about the formation of a section. The response apparently was favorable. In the spring of 1940, Professor C. W. Munshower wrote the mathematics departments of all colleges in the state inviting them to an organizational meeting. This meeting was held at Colgate University on Saturday Math 11, 1940 with 96 persons including 43 M.A.A. members present. Professor H. T. R. Aude of Colgate presided at the morning session; Professor F. F. Decker of Syracuse presided at the afternoon session; Professor W. M. Carruth of Hamilton presided at the dinner; and Professor W. B. Carver presided at the business meeting. At this business meeting it was soon decided to submit a petition to the Board of Governors requesting permission to establish a section. The 43 M.A.A. members present signed this petition. A proposed set of By-Laws had been prepared, and was adopted subject to approval of the Board of Governors. Officers elected for 1940-41 were: Chairman, Professor H. M. Gehman, University
of Buffalo; Vice-Chairman, Professor A. D. Campbell, Syracuse University; Secretary, Professor C. W. Munshower, Colgate University.

During the year the Chairman, Professor Gehman, appointed a great number of committees, each with many members, in order to have as many members as possible become active in the affairs of the section.

The second meeting of the Section was held at Cornell University on Saturday May 3, 1941 with some 90 persons in attendance. Professors Patterson of Hamilton and Seidlin of Alfred presided at scientific sessions, and Professor Carver presided at the dinner. At the business meeting, with Professor Gehman presiding, the following officers for 1941-42 were elected: Chairman, Professor A. D. Campbell, Syracuse University; Vice-Chairman, Professor D. S. Morse, Union College; Secretary, Professor C. W. Munshower, Colgate University. The next meeting was scheduled for May 2, 1942 at the University of Rochester.

But these were war years. The meeting was first postponed until the fall of 1942, and then finally cancelled. Not until 1947 did the times permit meetings to be held again. The first post-war meeting was held at the University of Rochester on Saturday May 10, 1947, attracting some 100 persons including 41 members of the M.A.A. Dean W. H. Durfee of Hobart and Professor C. W. Watkeys of Rochester presided at sessions. Officers elected were: Chairman, Professor D. S. Morse, Union College; Vice-Chairman, Professor E. B. Allen, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute: Secretary, Professor C. W. Munshower, Colgate University.

After this meetings were held regularly each year. Professor Munshower continued as Secretary until 1950. Professor N. G. Gunderson of the University of Rochester was elected Secretary in 1950, and continued in this office until 1967, when Professor Mary Williams of Skidmore College was elected. Each year the Vice-Chairman was duly elected Chairman for the next year, as provided in the by-laws, with the pattern being interrupted only twice. In 1956 Colonel Bessell of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point had been elected Vice-Chairman, but found he had to resign for personal reasons. Professor E. Haskins of Clarkson College of Technology was appointed his successor by the Executive Committee. In 1962 Professor R. Beinert of Hobart College had been elected Vice-Chairman. His tragic illness prevented him from succeeding to the post of Chairman, so Professor A. Fox of Union College was elected Chairman for 1963-64.

At the 1949 meeting a Committee to Study the Relation of Secondary School and College Mathematics in N.Y. State was appointed with Professor M.F. Rosskopf of Syracuse University as Chairman. After the report of this committee at the meeting of April 22, 1950, the Section voted to request the M.A.A. to provide financial support for the work of the committee. This was provided, and helped support the Committee as it joined with others at a meeting in Syracuse in May 1950 at which the Association of Mathematics Teachers of N.Y. State was organized. The Committee was finally dissolved in 1952.

At the 1951 meeting a committee to study the possibilities of sponsoring a contest for high school students was authorized. In 1952 L. Scholl reported for the committee on a contest in the Buffalo area sponsored by the Buffalo public schools. Several upstate schools began using
the contest materials of the Metropolitan M.A.A. Section. Then after the Board of Governors established a national contest at the Summer 1956 meeting, the Section at its 1957 meeting authorized the creation of an Upstate N.Y. Contest Committee. Professor Nura Turner [of the New York State College for Teachers at Albany] was appointed chairman of this committee, and has remained its chairman ever since. The annual contest has become one of the major activities of the Section.

The Executive Committee, consisting of the three officers of the Section and the Sectional Governor, was created by a resolution at the 1954 meeting. The first assigned duly of the Executive Committee was to prepare a revision of the By-Laws of the Section. This was done, and new By-Laws were adopted at the 1955 meeting.

Over the years various committees with titles such as the Committee on Strengthening Mathematics in the Section, the Committee to Study Certification Requirements, the Committee on Special Projects, the Committee on Community Colleges, etc. were created to study various matters of interest to the Section.

The Section has enjoyed a steady growth, from the initial 43 members in 1940 to 951 in 1965. Attendance at the yearly meeting has usually run between 100 and 150, and in a few cases, somewhat more. Programs have consisted of expository papers, research reports, panel discussions, films, papers on teaching and curriculum problems, demonstrations of models, position papers, reports of committees, etc.

As the Section enters its second twenty-five years, it does so with growing membership, a new Undergraduate Paper contest, a new Undergraduate Paper contest, and a trial period of fall as well as spring meetings.

N. G. Gunderson
December 1967

[This was written by Norman G. Gunderson after his term as Secretary-Treasurer of the Section.]

CHAPTER IV
GENERAL DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE SECOND 25 YEARS

Separate chapters will be devoted to some of the items mentioned by Gunderson in his closing paragraph. Here, structural and organizational changes in the Seaway Section over the years will be described.
The shift from a single Section Meeting once a year to the present schedule of Fall and Spring Meetings did not come easily. The account of the Business Meeting in 1965 which was published in the MONTHLY contains the following ruminations: “Considerable debate arone over the time and place of future meetings. Spring is crowded with meetings many members attend. Fall also has its meetings, plus football games. The summer break would make program planning harder. No decisions were reached…” However, by 1966, B. H. Geer, for the Committee on Time of Meeting, moved that Fall Meetings would be held in addition to Spring Meetings, for two years on an experimental basis. Obviously, the experiment worked, and the two-meeting per year schedule has become standard since that time.

The expansion of the Section Meetings to two day affairs came somewhat later. On Friday evenings before Section Meetings, many of those who arrived early met informally at the host institution for a few hours of conversation, coffee and cookies. (Others, of course, sought out the local pubs.) Whether or not these gatherings were an official part of the Section Meeting was sometimes a source of misunderstanding between the host institutions and the Program Committee, particularly at those SUNY Colleges with limited or non-existent entertainment budgets. (Those not familiar with SUNY can hardly appreciate the machinations which were sometimes required to obtain several dollars from some dean to purchase a few pounds of coffee and sweets for an informal reception.) In an attempt to avoid such problems, Violet Larney of SUNY at Albany, Vice-Chair and Program Chair at the time, proposed holding an official Friday evening session consisting of a dinner meeting with an invited speaker. At the October 1977 Fall Meeting, this custom was instituted, albeit with much trepidation on the part of some of the Executive Committee, since it required committing some Section funds ahead of time. The fears proved to be unfounded, the banquet was a success, and such dinners have become a regular part of our Section Meetings since then. (As Gunderson’s 24-year report shows, dinner meetings were a regular feature of the gatherings which were predecessors of our Section Meetings.)

As early as 1955 there was some embarrassment about the Section name. Indeed, when the proposed new By-Laws were adopted then, Chairman Rhodes pointed out that it might have been possible to find a new name of the section more descriptive of its geographical boundaries. At the Spring 1967 Business Meeting, Chairman Dick Wick Hall asked in amazement whether anyone had looked at a map of Ontario recently. He reminded us that it extends all the way to north of Minnesota! In preparing a revision to the By-Laws in 1971, a new name for the Upper New York State Section was finally proposed. (Probably only Chair Robert Sloan, Vice Chair Clarence Stephens and the author, then Secretary-Treasuer, knew until now that “Seaway Section” was Bob’s wife’s suggestion, arrived at after some fruitless efforts were spent trying to combine Ontario, Quebec and New York into some kind of clever acronym.)

The relationship between MAA and two-year college mathematics faculty members had at times been quite good, and at other times, quite the opposite. In the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, the national organization made an effort to accommodate the special needs of this group by taking over publication of the Two-Year College Journal, and by encouraging Sections to give some thought to how two-year faculty could become interested in participating in MAA. At the May 1970 Meeting, our Section set up an ad hoc Committee on InterCollege Relations to study problems and relations between two-year colleges and four-year colleges of the Section. Members were Paul Gilvert, Syracuse University; Calvin Lathan, Monroe CC; Malcolm Smiley,
SUNY Albany; Lawrence Trivieri, Mohawk Valley CC; and John Vadney, Fulton-Montgomery CC. The committee renamed itself the Tw-Year College Committee, and presented its report and recommendations at the May 1971 Meeting. These included the creation of a new office in the Section, a Vice-Chairman for Tw-Year Colleges. Records of the November 1971 meeting indicate that problems of articulation of two-year colleges and other colleges were discussed at length.

At a special Business meeting at the 1971 Fall Meeting, new By-Laws were adopted, including a name change to “Seaway Section.” In response to the committee’s recommendations, the new office of Second Vice-Chairman for Two-Year Colleges was established, as was a three-year term for the Secretary-Treasurer.

In Spring of 1972, Larry Trivieri was elected to this new position on the Executive Committee.

It may be of interest to note how Larry Trivieri became not only the first, but also the fourth Second Vice-Chairman for Two-Year Colleges. It seems that the Nominations Committee Chair, who shall be nameless here, became distracted when the Committee report was given at the Spring 1975 Business Meeting and blurted out Larry’s name instead of that of the agreed upon nominee. Larry was dutifully elected again by voice vote, as is usually the case at Business Meetings, with none but a confused Nominations Committee, Larry and the other “nominee” aware of what had gone on. The Section Archives contains a sheepish letter from the Committee Chair about this incident. The original candidate, Richard Meili was finally elected to the position at the next Business Meeting for the following term. This perhaps explains why the Nominations Committee reports are now published in the Newsletter ahead of time.

The Fall 1972 Meeting was held at Mohawk Valley Community College. This was the first time that the Section had been invited to a community college for a meeting.

At the Fall Meeting of 1977, Section dues were abolished, and a registration fee of $3 for meetings was established.

Also, in Fall of 1977, the Section authorized publication of a newsletter on a trial basis for three years. Donald Trasher, of SUC at Geneseo, was appointed editor. The first issue appeared in Spring of 1978, and semi-annual issues have been published and mailed to membership of the Section since that time.

A typical issue of the Newsletter contains the program of the upcoming Section Meeting, a profile of the institution hosting the meeting, Section news, minutes of the previous business meeting, committee reports, news items from some of the campuses in the section, and announcements of future national and local meetings. Under the editorial direction of Professor Trasher, the Seaway Section Newsletter has developed into a valuable resource for Section members. Since the MONTHLY no longer publishes reports of meetings of the sections, the Newsletter is the only source of information about programs of our meetings and abstracts of papers presented at these meetings. (It is unclear where source material will be found when the
Seaway Section prepares its 75th Anniversary History. Perhaps the Newsletters should be published on acid-free paper, or also on disks, for long-term future reference.)

In order to provide the opportunity for long range planning of activities of the Section by its officers, the By-Laws were revised in May of 1978. Except for the Secretary-Treasurer, the terms of the officers were expanded to two years, and, in contrast to past practice, the Executive Committee had considerable carry-over from year to year by staggering the terms of the officers. No longer did an officer spend much of the year learning what to do, only to be replaced by a new person who began the process all over again. The By-Laws also created the new positions of Chair-Elect and Immediate Past Chair. These modifications followed guidelines suggested by the national MAA’s model By-Laws for Sections.

The Section has continued to demonstrate its interest in maintaining good relations with the two-year colleges in the area. Both the 1983 Spring Meeting in Utica and the 1985 Spring Meeting in Rochester were held in conjunction with meetings of the New York State Mathematics Association of Two-Year Colleges. (NYSMATYC)

In 1984, Edwin Hoefer of RIT became the Seaway Section representative for the Teaching Experiential Applied Mathematics Project. The project, funded jointly by MAA and NSF, involved production of a series of six modules on applied mathematics. Each module consisted of a booklet and a video-tape. Several schools in the Section used the material as mathematics club projects, and sometimes in classes to generate discussion of “real-world” mathematics. The project, apparently, is no longer funded at this time.

In Fall of 1988, the MAA began the process of establishing student chapters at colleges and universities throughout the country. Thomas Upson of R.I.T. has been appointed Coordinator of Student Chapter Activities for the Seaway Section. As of January 1, 1990, there are seven student chapters in the Section. Chapters have been founded at Alfred University, SUC at Fredonia, SUC at Geneseo, Russell Sage College, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Syracuse University and Utica College. The chapter at Fredonia was the first in this Section to be established, and only the seventeenth student chapter in the entire nation. Three more schools are in the process of being organized at the time of this writing.

A joint resolution by the Executive Committees of the Metropolitan New York Section and the Seaway Section regarding the undergraduate college mathematical requirements for professional certification of New York State’s elementary school teachers was drafted in the Fall of 1988. It was transmitted to the New York State Commissioner of Education and to the members of the Board of Regents of New York State.

The MAA has recently produced two sets of materials to promote awareness of mathematics and its applications for high school students. MAWIS, Mathematics at Work in Society, is designed for students in grades 8 and above. It includes four 20-minute television video cassettes and a 32 page project book. The goal of MAWIS is to promote career awareness in mathematics. AIM, Applications in Mathematics, is an integrated set of learning modules featuring problems from industry and is aimed at a similar audience. An AIM module consists of a three-part video tape discussing the problem, hints to get started, and finally the solution,
together with a student resource book and a teacher resource book. According to Bruce Haney, the Section coordinator, the Section has possession of its own sets of video tapes for both of these projects, and those wishing to borrow them, or copy them, should contact him at Onondaga CC.

In contrast to 25 years ago, the Section membership now stands at 1428. With respect to finances, Section records contain a report from Mary Williams at the end of her term as Secretary-Treasurer showing a balance, as reported at the May 11, 1968 meeting, of $2.60. The October 1989 Section NEWSLETTER reports that the Section had $5,230.64 in its treasury as of October 1, 1989. Clearly, the Seaway Section is in good health, and is well-prepared to serve the mathematical community in the coming years.

CHAPTER V
FROM 1990 TO THE PRESENT

Since 1990 the Seaway Section has seen both continuity and change with continuity predominating. The format of the two meetings each year has become fairly consistently set as follows:

Friday Afternoon – Meetings of the officers of the section as an Executive Committee and as an Extended Executive Committee,

Friday Evening – A banquet and a speaker.

Saturday Morning – After a welcome by a leader of the host institution, the morning consists of three invited talks, one of which is either the Gehman Lecture (Spring) or the Randolph Lecture (Fall). The Section Business Meeting is held in one of the spaces between talks.

Saturday Afternoon – Many sessions of contributed talks with specialized workshops and panel discussions.

As will be discussed later, there are additions to the above in that there are usually Friday afternoon activities centered around Project NeXT and increasingly often Friday evening student activities such as mathematical game shows.

For the Fall meeting of 1990 a new Invited Lecture in Mathematics Education was added to the Saturday morning program. The first speaker in what was to become a series was Peter Taylor of Queen’s University speaking on Calculus: Where are We Going?. At the Spring meeting of 1991, the Executive Committee voted to establish an annual lecture in Mathematics Education, to parallel the Gehman Lecture given in the Spring meeting. The committee then called for nominations for the name of this lecture. At the Spring meeting of 1993 the Executive Committee announced that the lecture would be named The John F. Randolph Lecture in Mathematics Education after the late John Randolph who had had a long and active association with the section as a faculty member at the University of Rochester and Rochester Institute of
Technology. The first lecture under this new name was *A History of Mathematics Course for Teachers*, by Israel Kleiner of York University at the Fall 1993 meeting.

At the Fall meeting of 1991 Steve Cavior, Chair of the Section announced that the President of the MAA had unveiled a new program of awards for the MAA. These would be awards for distinguished college or university teaching. A section awards committee was formed to act on this announcement. By the Spring meeting of 1992 the Section was ready to award its first Distinguished Teaching Award to Professor Peter Taylor of Queen’s University. In the Fall of 2004 the Section approved naming the teaching award the Clarence F. Stephens Award for Distinguished Teaching, honoring the former chair of the Mathematics department at SUNY Potsdam.

The section had its first web page and web site active for the Spring 1996 meeting at Elmira College. The webmaster was Dietrich Kappe and it was housed at his corporation. It moved to Binghamton University where the new webmaster was Fernando Guzman. The website moved in 2009 to RIT with Anurag Agrawal as webmaster.

At the Spring 1999 meeting at Syracuse University Luisa Kappe, Cheri Boyd, and Jack Graver founded our Seaway NExT program with the name "Seaway NExT/PFF". PFF stands for “preparing future faculty”. We were one of the first sections having a Section NExT. The 10th anniversary of the program was held again at Syracuse in 2009.

In 2007 the section undertook a revision of its by-laws. Most of the changes involved tightening the language of the document and bringing it in line with the by-laws of the national MAA. One significant change was the separation of the Secretary-Treasurer position into two positions. The reporting duties of the position had increased over the years enough that breaking the load into two parts seemed advisable.

Probably the major change in the section since 1990 is the attendance at the meetings. Not only has the overall attendance grown but there has been a very significant increase in the participation of undergraduate students.