

HISTORY

No records can be found to establish the exact time the Southeastern Professional Photographers Association was founded. There are some references in various publications, which indicate that the association came into being in 1921. Charles Abel's book of professional photographers shows work by several SEPPA members about that time. (During that period the organization was referred to as Southeastern Photographers Association or SPA.)

There were a number of famous photographers of that era located in the Southeast who became presidents of association. Chester Elliott of Atlanta was one of the very first. His wife, Maude, recalls Mr. Elliott attending meetings early in the 20's, but has no records of specific dates.

As time progressed into the 30's and 40's the history becomes clearer when such notables as Ray Goodrich of Winston-Salem, NC, B.A. "Pops" Culbertson of Asheville, NC and Mills Steele took over the leadership. James Thompson of Knoxville, TN, also was President of PPA in 1946. Culbertson was SPA President in 1947 and Steele in 1948.

There was no regular place for the conventions, which were held each year. Sites were chosen in Asheville, Miami, Chattanooga, Charlotte, Atlanta, Macon and elsewhere. Interest in the regional seemed to wane in the 50's to the point where in 1962 there was no convention held.

A call came out by then President James Garrett to all state presidents and immediate past presidents to meet in Atlanta on June 4, 1961 to discuss the future of the association. Out of this meeting came what is now known as Southeastern Professional Photographers Assn. (SEPPA). It was decided that each participating state would have two representatives (at that time it was designated as the president and immediate past president). The regional would meet every other year instead of annually to give the suppliers more time to participate in state trade shows.

The infusion of new blood from each state brought a renewed interest in the regional. Several years later, the decision by PPA to allow regionals to hold affiliated judging and give Seals of Approval for national acceptance gave the organization another boost. The wide interest in having photographer's work judged in the local region created a positive impact on the quality and quantity of the photographic competition.

In recent years the effort has been on refinement of the "Atlanta Resolution". States were allowed to select the person who would represent their state on the Board of Governors since many of the past presidents indicated a lack of interest. It now stands that the current president of the state and an additional member chosen by the state form each state's representation on the Board of Governors.

Because of the complexity of the operation, certain powers were given to the Executive Committee, made up of the officers of SEPPA. In 1962 Olive Grose of Miami was hired on a part-time basis as Executive Secretary. Upon her retirement, the officer position was expanded to include a secretary and a treasurer. Until 1977, the organization operated in this fashion. This came to a close when Robert Symms (a past president) became Executive Vice President, a position he held until 1985. At that time Randy Bradford (another past president) became Executive Director until 1997 when Tom McCollum took the reigns.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE is the official magazine. It was founded by Richard Hinman as a Florida publication and developed into a regional publication in 1955. Upon Mr. Hinman's retirement, the magazine was published by Don Hughes of Alabama, with Bob Troup of Georgia as business manager. At Mr. Hughes' retirement from the publication, Van and Mary Lee Blankenship (Mr. Blankenship is another past president) became co-publishers and held that job until 1997 when Tom McCollum took over.

In recent years the Trade Show has become a popular shopping place for photographers in the Southeast. The Trade Show has grown considerably and is now the largest photography Trade Show in the Southeast. It is ranked among the finest regional expositions in the country.