



FESTIVALS

USA



*A comprehensive guide to over
1200 annual celebrations
throughout the country*



ROBERT MEYER, JR.

IFEA 50th Anniversary History

The Founding Fathers

In 1956, John Geisler, then director of the St. Paul (Minnesota) Winter Carnival, set out to create a forum where managers and executive directors of the nation's festivals could get together to share ideas and information. Geisler had been influenced by Robert Meyer's *Festivals U.S.A.* in which the contributing writer for *The New York Times* reported on his travels to America's festival cities.

Geisler contacted Meyer and told him of his idea to form a national festival association. Meyer was intrigued and agreed to meet Geisler and Max Colwell, then manager of the Portland Rose Festival, in Oregon in June of 1956, to discuss the concept. The three men enthusiastically supported the idea of bringing together festival managers in a formal group. Geisler offered to host a one-day meeting in St. Paul later that summer to explore the proposal further.

Invitations were issued, and six festival managers traveled to the Twin Cities to meet with Geisler, Colwell and Meyer. The group included a cross-section of some of the most influential festivals in the United States. Those in attendance included Reynolds Andricks of Fiesta San Jacinto in San Antonio; Charles Gillett of New York is a Summer Festival in New York City; Roy Erickson of the near-by Minneapolis (Minnesota) Aquatennial; Clarence Arata of the Washington (D.C.) Cherry Blossom Festival; Joseph Mickler of the Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla Pirate Festival in Tampa, Florida; and Walter Van Kamp of Seattle (Washington) Seafair.

The eight festival managers in attendance were unanimous in their intentions to proceed with creating a formal trade association. The group scheduled a fall meeting for the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York City and invited festival managers from across America to attend. Meyer lined up nationally-known speakers from the media to address the festival managers, who promptly voted to form the Festival Managers Association (FMA). In 1957, when Pierre Trombley of Canada's Quebec City Winter Carnival asked to join, the directors unanimously agreed to renaming the organization the International Festivals Association (IFA).

John Geisler was elected IFA's first president. Nearly 40 years later, when he was elected to IFA's

Hall of Fame, Geisler expressed pride "to have been a part of what has now become an internationally recognized organization and thrilled that it has grown to such great numbers."

IFEA First Meeting Attendees

The IFEA began as a spark of a vision by John Geisler, of the St. Paul Winter Carnival, with the help of Robert Meyer, the author of *Festivals U.S.A.* and several other top industry leaders of their time. We know from recorded minutes that there were 14 original attendees at the first official meeting held on October 31st, 1956 in New York City. The following is a list of those attendees to the best of our knowledge.

John Geisler	St. Paul Winter Carnival St. Paul, Minnesota (President)
Robert E. Meyer, Jr.	Festival Information Service and Author of <i>Festivals U.S.A.</i> ; New York City (Executive Secretary)
Joseph R. Mickler	Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla Pirate Festival; Tampa, Florida (Vice President)
Reynolds L. Andricks	Fiesta San Jacinto San Antonio, Texas (Treasurer)
Roy Erickson	Minneapolis Aquatennial Minneapolis, Minnesota
Jack Batten	Wichita Mountain Easter Sunrise Service; Lawton, Oklahoma
Dr. Alfred Shoemaker	Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Festival Bethel, Pennsylvania
J.H. Van Aernam	Albany Tulip Festival Albany, New York
Jack Golbert	Festival of Seven Arts Pike, New Hampshire
Charles Gillett	New York is a Summer Festival / NYCVB; New York City
John D. Meyers	Rose Festival: Newark, New York
Walter A. Van Camp	Seattle Seafair; Seattle, Washington
Clarence Arata	National Cherry Blossom Festival; Washington, D.C.
Max Colwell	Portland Rose Festival Portland, Oregon