



Participants in the 1945 AOCS fall meeting in Chicago pause for a photograph taken during a Thursday afternoon session in the Illinois Room at the La Salle Hotel. A total of 516 persons attended, making it AOCS' largest meeting at that point. Presiding at the session is Howard C. Black of Swift & Co., who would serve as AOCS president in 1957. A few years later a fall meeting in New York drew 713 participants.

## 1939–1948: Rebound

AOCS survived the Great Depression. Some of the funds frozen by bank closures had been recovered. Membership, which had dropped to about 200 in 1933, reached an all-time high of 411 in 1938. Meeting attendance once again was setting records. Things were looking up.

### George Willhite

“Unsatisfactory conditions in the fats and oils industry” had prevailed for the past year, incoming AOCS President H.C. Dormitzer told the 1939 annual meeting in New Orleans, and that, he said, was why fewer new members than expected had joined AOCS during the past year.

### Unanticipated growth spurs major changes

Dormitzer might have been more optimistic if he could have foreseen that during its fourth decade AOCS would:

- Triple its membership.
- Hire its first paid staff member.
- Hold its first short course.
- Publish the first issue of the *Journal of the American Oil Chemists' Society*.
- Issue the first new AOCS methods book since the 1920s.

But Dormitzer's characterization of the late 1930s was correct. The worldwide economic depression that began in 1929 was still affecting commerce worldwide. European and Asian conflicts, which would escalate into World War II, were disrupting traditional business patterns for oil-seeds and for fats and oils.

World War II would spur research into fats and oils production and applications throughout the world. Nations needed to find ways to provide sufficient edible and nonedible fats and oils for nutritional and military purposes.

In China, a recent university graduate, Szu Shiang Chang, worked in a factory during World War II to convert tung oil into automotive fuel (in short supply because of petroleum shortages). Chang later would emigrate to the United States, where he would become known as Stephen S. Chang, head of the food science department at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, and be elected as AOCS' 1971 president.

By war's end, the United States had become a net exporter, rather than an im-

## A new home on the Chicago River

AOCS' business offices for more than three decades after its 1909 founding had been in the desk drawers of volunteer members.

In 1925, J.C.P. Helm became AOCS secretary-treasurer, a post he was to hold for nearly two decades. His laboratories, first on Tchoupitoulas Street and later on Poydras Street in New Orleans, became AOCS' *de facto* administrative headquarters until 1944. The editorial headquarters for AOCS journals had been in the desk of the incumbent editor. In 1940, AOCS prepared to once again take over all operations of its journal—including advertising sales, circulation, and other business affairs—that had been handled by contract publishers since the mid-1920s. The change was to occur as of October 1941.

Therefore, AOCS hired John J. Haney, a graduate student in journalism at Northwestern University, in October 1940 to be AOCS' first paid employee, as a part-time assistant to *Oil & Soap* editor H.L. Roschen.

In November 1941, Haney became a full-time employee taking over business operations of the journal in addition to editorial work. Using a desk part-time in Roschen's office at Swift & Co. would no longer suffice. AOCS now needed room for the editorial, advertising, subscription, and financial records Haney would have to maintain.

John P. Harris, AOCS' 1933 president, offered space, at \$10 a month, to AOCS at his West Virginia Pulp & Paper Co. office on the 13th floor of the Pure Oil Building, 35 E. Wacker Dr., Chicago, along the south bank of the Chicago River, a block west of Michigan Avenue.

Haney had joined the U.S. Army by August 1942. Haney, whose various assignments were noted in the AOCS journal during the war, would contract a fungal lung infection in New Guinea while serving with the U.S. Army Signal Corps. He died in 1950 after a recurrence of that infection.

Isabel Cumming was hired to replace Haney in 1942. When J.C.P. Helm began, on doctor's orders, to reduce his workload in 1943, Cumming became a "corresponding secretary-treasurer" coordinating with Helm to handle orders for methods, supplies, or just general correspondence. Cumming married Richard Seimer, who was with a Chicago ship and bridge building firm, and resigned in April 1944 when Richard was assigned to Seneca, Illinois, 73 miles southwest of Chicago.

In 1944, Lucy Hawkins, a lecturer at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, was hired to replace Isabel Cumming Seimer.

When Helm fully retired in 1944, the Governing Board appointed Hawkins as "acting executive secretary" to run AOCS business operations beginning in 1945. Harris succeeded Helm as AOCS treasurer.

The Pure Oil Building on the southern bank of the Chicago River would be "home" to AOCS for the next quarter-century.

In 1948, the "acting" was removed from Hawkins' title. She would be AOCS' staff leader for approximately 13 years before retiring. Membership rose to more than 2,700 from less than 1,000, and journal circulation rose to 5,100 from approximately 1,800, during her tenure.

### AOCS' 1000th member

In 1945, Milton A. Glaser, chief chemist and director of research of Standard Varnish Works in Chicago, became AOCS' 1000th member. Glaser later was elected president of the Federation of Societies of Coatings Technology and had a corporate research center named in his honor. He died February 26, 2003.

For a full list of this decade's timeline, AOCS presidents, and annual meeting locations, log in and visit [www.aocs.org/press/inform/](http://www.aocs.org/press/inform/).

porter, of fats and oils and U.S. soybean oil exports soared in 1943 and 1944.

Lamar Kishlar, in his 1944 AOCS president's report, observed that "In recent years, there have been tremendous increases in the production of certain fats and oils. There has been relatively great curtailment in others. The emergency has caused marked replacement and substitution in many fields. Changes in distribution have caused new methods of analysis, new production techniques, and new methods of trading. All of these changes will leave their mark on the science, industry, and commerce of the fats and oils fields in the post-war world."

The shortage of fats and oils "fostered the development of synthetic surface-active agents from petroleum products," AOCS members H.T. Spannuth noted in a 1948 *JAACS* article. Petrochemicals have long since surpassed oleochemicals as the primary source of surfactants for household laundry products.

The AOCS decade that began in 1939, which had begun with a gloomy commentary by incoming AOCS president Dormitzer, thus became one of unexpected growth.

By 1948, AOCS would have 1,500 members (55 from outside the continental United States), up from fewer than 500 AOCS members (six from outside North America) in 1939. One new member in June 1944 was a young corporate researcher named A. Richard Baldwin, who was to become one of AOCS' most prominent leaders.

### PUBLICATIONS

*Oil & Soap* had been published since 1932 by Gillette Publishing Co. of Chicago. Gillette had assumed responsibility for business management, printing, and fiscal affairs of the journal. But by the late 1930s, AOCS leaders thought the society should be receiving a larger financial return from its journal and decided to reclaim control of the business affairs of the journal, effective in late 1941. The takeover was one of many major changes for AOCS during the decade.

One had occurred during October 1940 when AOCS hired its first paid staff member. John J. Haney, a graduate journalism student at Northwestern University, became a part-time assistant to *Oil & Soap* editor H.L. Roschen in anticipation of AOCS resuming full control of *Oil & Soap*. Haney was to perform some of Roschen's admin-

istrative duties as well as help promote circulation and advertising sales. Haney left in 1942 to serve in the U.S. Army during World War II. He was succeeded by Isabel Cumming Seimer.

Seimer's successor in April 1944 was Lucy Hawkins, who would work for AOCS until the early 1960s. (In mid-2008, AOCS had 38 staff members; see separate article on page 530 on AOCS' early staff members.)

During World War II there also was growing pressure to change the name of the society's journal, which had been known as *Oil & Soap* since 1932. The title sounded too much like a trade journal to some members, who hoped to attract more academic members. AOCS' first president from academia had been University of Wisconsin professor H.A. Schuette in 1940. In 1944, the journal committee proposed changing the title to the *Journal of the American Oil Chemists' Society*. The Governing Board approved the change by a six to four vote during its spring meeting, but many members said they preferred *Oil & Soap*. A vote taken at the 1944 fall meeting showed 44 members favoring the change and 32 opposed, but the number of voters was considered too small a sample of AOCS' 1,100 members. Members were polled by mail in 1945 and again during the 1946 annual meeting in New Orleans. The tally showed a significant majority favoring the change.

The first issue with the new title was published in January 1947.

## GROWTH

In 1943, four years after Dormitzer's glum 1939 report, a record 132 new members joined AOCS. That record fell the next year as 150 persons joined. AOCS President Kishlar told the 1944 annual meeting that fully one-third of AOCS members had joined during the past five years.

Growth brought further change. J.C.P. Helm, AOCS secretary-treasurer for nearly two decades, told the Governing Board in 1944 that health problems meant he would have to give up his AOCS duties. In October 1944, the board designated Lucy Hawkins as the society's "acting executive secretary" to handle business affairs of the society.

The next spring, in 1945, AOCS President Klare Markley noted that AOCS had gained as many members during the past five years as it had during the preceding thirty. That rapid membership growth was

why the society could no longer rely solely on volunteers and part-time help to handle administrative tasks, he said.

Why the rapid increase? War-spurred demand for more fats and oils was the primary reason. U.S. domestic fat production had risen to 11 billion pounds by 1944, up about 33% from 1939's 8.2 billion pounds, R.M. Walsh of the U.S. Department of Agriculture told the 1944 annual meeting. Vegetable oil production had jumped 75% since 1939, he said, and animal fat production had risen by 25%. During 1944, soybean oil surpassed cottonseed oil as the U.S. primary edible oil.

The war forced AOCS to shorten one national meeting and to cancel another. The fall 1942 meeting in Chicago was limited to two days, rather than the usual three, so that members would miss less time at work. A wartime ban on nonessential travel led to cancellation of the 1945 annual meeting, scheduled for May 9–11 in New Orleans. Instead, AOCS officers met on those dates in Memphis to conduct the necessary business of an annual meeting. A verbatim transcript was created for future reference for members who were unable to attend the meeting.

AOCS formed a second topical section—on drying oils—during World War II, but it was discontinued after 1947 when a special committee on topical sections concluded the strength of AOCS was in its providing a common meeting ground of various interests "and any move to disrupt this common meeting ground would tend to undermine rather than strengthen the Society." That decision would be reversed four decades later.

## UNIFORM METHODS COMMITTEE

The first revised AOCS methods book since the 1920s was issued in 1946 with Virgil Mehlenbacher as the editor and J.J. Vollertsen as chairperson of the methods committee. Vollertsen was the second chairman of the methods committee, having succeeded charter member Felix Paquin in 1929.

The new methods book, available as a bound volume or in loose-leaf format, had larger-size pages for analysts' convenience. The revision incorporated all previous revisions plus any new methods approved during the interim.

Brazilians planned to translate the new methods book into Portuguese for use in Brazil, AOCS President Reid Milner told the 1948 annual meeting.

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## TRADITIONS HAVE TO START SOMETIME

During the 1944 meeting, Paquin, the society's first president, invited attending past presidents to a cocktail party during which someone suggested the society's past presidents should hold an annual dinner. The first such dinner occurred in 1946 and has become an annual meeting tradition.

As part of the 1946 past presidents' dinner, the four charter members attending—Paquin, G.W. Agee, E.R. Barrow, and T.C. Law—received small pins noting their status.

## 1948: A YEAR OF PRECEDENTS

The closing year of AOCS' fourth decade, 1948, was memorable for several reasons.

■ AOCS adopted a new constitution. The new constitution created three "member-at-large" positions on the governing board and eliminated the second, third, and fourth vice presidential posts. The fourth vice president position had been added in 1928 to be filled by a representative from AOCS' soap section. The new constitution also put into writing what had been an unwritten tradition of having each year's

vice president be the unopposed candidate for president the following year. Another change specified that elections be conducted by mail ballot to permit more members to have a chance to vote.

■ AOCS' first short course, *Vegetable Oils: Their Production, Processing, and Uses*, drew 136 persons during mid-August to the University of Illinois. The August 16–21 event included two plant trips and some social events. It was first publicized as being limited to 50 participants, but the final attendance included 117 students plus faculty. The course marked AOCS' entry into the educational short course area. Through 2008, more than 7,000 persons had participated in approximately 150 AOCS short courses. Most AOCS short courses have been held in the United States, but Brazil, Canada, France, India, Mexico, Turkey, and Venezuela have been short course sites through 2008.

■ The AOCS fall meeting on November 15–17, 1948, in New York City's Hotel Pennsylvania was the first with concurrent sessions. There were 59 presentations during the 2.5-day meeting. Approximately 713 registrants (about 400 members, 226 nonmembers, plus spouses) and about 100

exhibitors made it AOCS' largest fall meeting ever.

In May 1948, H.L. Roschen, who had served as AOCS journal editor for 11 years, resigned. The board selected AOCS' immediate past president Reid Milner as the new editor. He was head of the analytical and physical chemistry division at the U.S. Department of Agriculture post-utilization research laboratory in Peoria, Illinois. Milner would serve as president of the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) in 1973, the only person ever to be president of both AOCS and IFT. Milner appointed Richard Baldwin as his assistant editor. A year later, Baldwin would become editor, a post he would retain until the 1980s.

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*George Willhite, who is preparing this series of articles as AOCS' centennial historian, retired from AOCS in 2002 after 27 years as a member of its publications staff. He is an honorary member of AOCS. He can be contacted via e-mail at willhite@aocs.org.*

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**Next month: 1949–1958:  
Post-war adjustments**

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