

# A NEW ASSOCIATION IS BORN

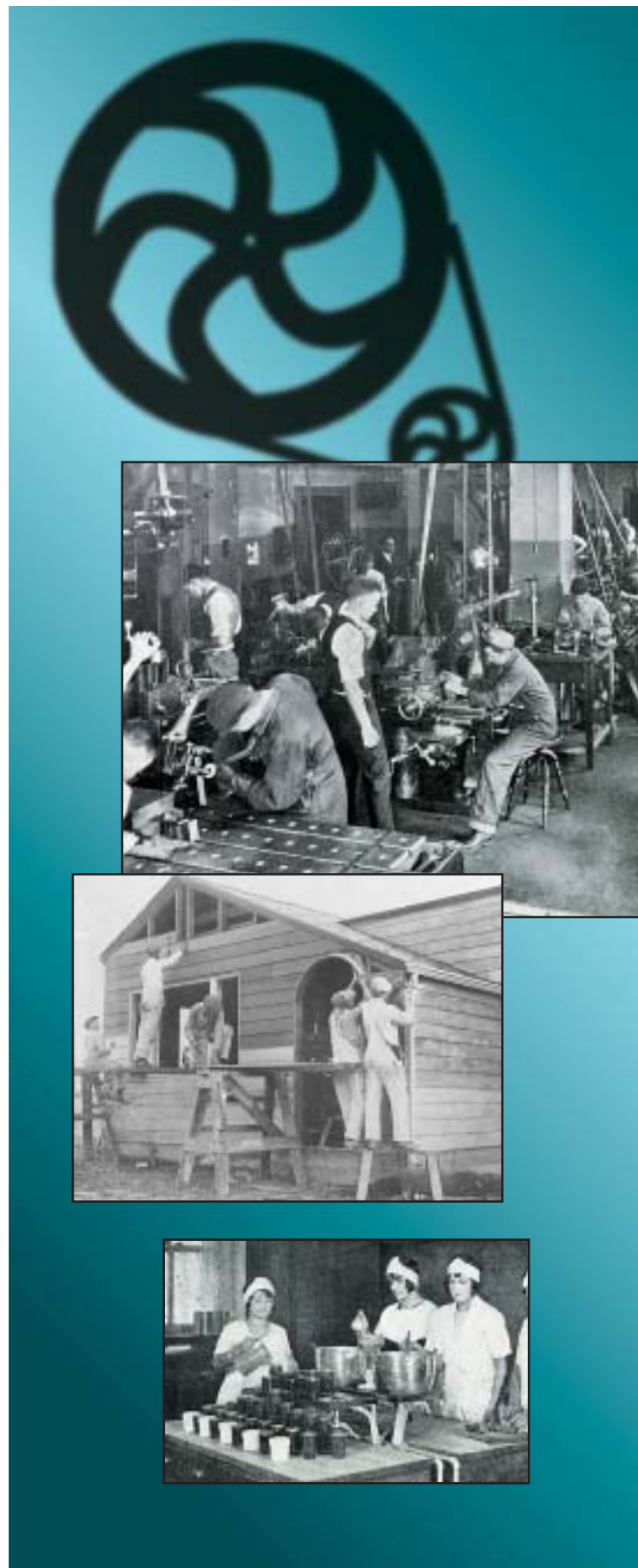
**W**hen the National Society for Vocational Education and the Vocational Education Association of the Middle West came together in 1926 to form the American Vocational Association (AVA), a strong new voice was created.

Seventy-five years later, the AVA has become the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), and the programs that were once called vocational are now called career and technical. Although our name has changed, our commitment to providing opportunities for success for all of our nation's students has never wavered throughout our long history.

## **Federal Funding and a Federal Board**

When President Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act into law in 1917, it was the beginning of federal funding for vocational education in the United States. In addition to the \$1.7 million appropriation for 1917-18, the act also created the Federal Board for Vocational Education to administer the provisions of the new law and to work on program planning and resolution of disputes. States were required to create state boards for vocational education, and states and local communities were required to match federal appropriations. The Federal Board approved the plans that were prepared by the state boards.

As federal funding under the Smith-Hughes Act increased at intervals that reached \$7.2 million for 1925-26, the Federal Board began to look at the differences in the ways the states were utilizing these funds and carrying out their state vocational programs. Recognizing that their union would give them greater power on Capitol Hill and in dealing with the Federal Board, the National Society for Vocational Education and the Vocational Association of the Middle West completed their merger in 1926.



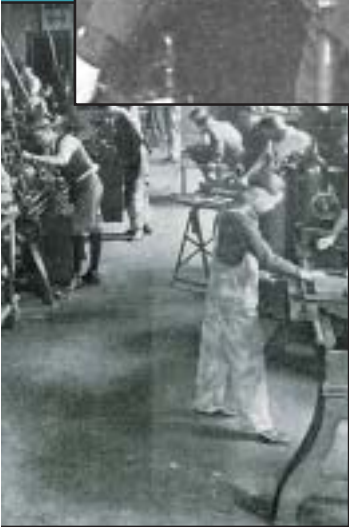
## The New Association

By President Edwin A. Lee, Director of the Division of Vocational Education, University of California, Berkeley, Calif., from the *American Vocational Association News Bulletin*, April 1926

The American Vocational Association is now an assured fact. With the same unanimous vote that was given by the National Society for Vocational Education, the Vocational Association of the Middle West at its annual meeting held in Des Moines March 20, voted to amalgamate and thus took the final step necessary to the actual organization of a truly national association for Vocational Education. Particularly gratifying were the several addresses made at this meeting by men who have been active in the affairs of the Middle West Association through all the years of its remarkable service. The spirit with which they approved an action which meant the disappearance of the society which they had sponsored and a name which had come to mean much in the great Mississippi Valley, was an indication of how definite was their conviction that the American Vocational Association would carry on for the country at large what the Middle West Association had done so successfully for its own territory.

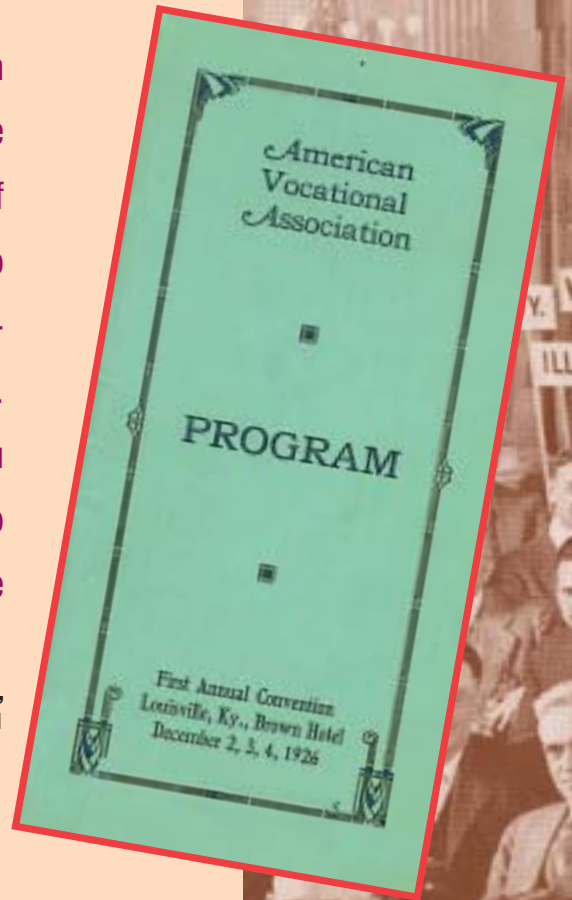
The American Vocational Association therefore faces the future with an absolutely united personnel. Its potentialities are limited only by the vision and the effort which every member can bring to bear upon the problems which it will face. There will be many difficulties. There will be some disappointments. Such are inevitable, but they will be overshadowed completely if the splendid spirit which now apparently motivates every vocational educator can be kept at the fine level of enthusiasm which at present exists.

No group recognizes more clearly than the Executive Committee just how high is the level which must be maintained in the new organization. As the issue of the amalgamation, the American Vocational Association inherits from both of its progenitors high standards, fine spirit, lofty aspirations, and above all, a tradition of deep absorption in the work to be done on the part of the officers chosen to guide this organization. The new Executive Committee can do no better, therefore, than to set its standards in the light of the highest of those which have animated the leaders of the two parent organizations, and it is with this determination that the officers face the problems before them.



“The American Vocational Association is an organization through which vocational educators throughout the country seek to crystallize their thinking in the field of vocational education and through which they attempt to interpret to the public the aims and objectives and significance of a national program of vocational education. Doesn't it give you something of a thrill to know that you are a member of an organization whose ideals are so high, whose usefulness is so great, and whose influence will live on through the ages?”

—Charles M. Miller,  
American Vocational Association President, 1930-1931





## Building the Foundation

The constitution of the new American Vocational Association was developed by committees representing both of the merging associations, and the officers and executive committee were nominated by a committee chosen from the membership of both associations. Members of both of the old associations automatically became members of the new one. The committees representing the different sections in 1926 were agricultural education, vocational guidance, trade and industry education, commercial education, home economics education, part-time education and rehabilitation education. Within six months of the founding of AVA, 27 state vocational education associations became affiliated with the new association.

By 1926, enrollment in the vocational education programs of agriculture, home economics, and trade and industrial had grown to almost 900,000, and in 1929, Congress passed the George-Reed Act, authorizing an increase of \$1 million annually from 1930 to 1934 to expand vocational education in agriculture and home economics. In 1931, AVA President Charles M. Miller said, "Vocational education in this country has grown from a number of small isolated beginnings into a great national education institution."

The early 1930s were difficult times for our country, and vocational education had to work to keep its federal funding in the midst of the Great Depression. In 1932, an attempt to repeal the Smith-Hughes Act was defeated, and an AVA study on changing conditions in industry, commerce, agriculture and the home was made a major project in the Federal Board for Vocational Education research program for that year. However, in 1933, President Roosevelt transferred the functions of the weakened Federal Board for Vocational Education to the U.S. Office of Education.

On January 1, 1934, the AVA established its national headquarters in Washington, D.C., where it could maintain an active national leadership role in advocacy of vocational education, and Lindley H. (L.H.) Dennis assumed his position as the association's first full-time executive secretary.

A temporary measure passed in 1934, the George-Ellzey Act, authorized \$3 million annually for three years to be apportioned equally in agriculture, home economics, and trades and industry.

Then, in 1936, the George-Deen Act authorized \$14 million a year for agriculture, home economics, trades and industry, and distributive occupations. This marked the first time that marketing occupations were recognized under federal vocational education legislation. The George-Deen Act, however, permitted Congress to re-determine the amount appropriated each year, which made the need for a vocational education presence in Washington even more apparent.

### **Helping in Hard Times**

President Roosevelt's New Deal encouraged "leisure time training" for self-improvement and enrichment in addition to controlled industry and planned agriculture, but Ray Fife, the president of AVA from 1932 to 1934, noted, "Vocational education has had much experience in adult education. Nearly two-thirds of the vocational education students of the nation are enrolled in adult classes. It can contribute much in organization and method to other forms of adult education."

Even in the difficult times of the Depression, our programs proved their worth, as those with the greatest levels of skills and training were the last to lose their jobs and sometimes remained employed. Farmers who had studied in our classes were better prepared to adapt to new conditions and, therefore, had better chances to keep their farms. Vocational education for youths, apprenticeship training and adult education during the Depression helped maintain a prepared workforce as our nation recovered economically. Instructors in vocational courses sometimes took salary reductions, but few vocational classes were discontinued. And the AVA was there to help facilitate nationwide discussion and the exchange of ideas to help solve the problems of the Depression and to help with a return to normal employment and productivity.

As the decade drew to a close, there were new difficulties looming on the horizon, and in September 1939, L.H. Dennis, AVA's executive secretary, wrote, "...because of the national emergency growing out of the international situation, the vocational education leadership of the country stands ready to definitely and promptly make such expansion in the program as will meet the needs of the hour. We speak for a united vocational education leadership in assuring the President of the United States of our willingness to cordially cooperate with him and the various governmental agencies in the further and prompt expansion of our vocational education program in the training of an adequate supply of skilled workers for essential industries."



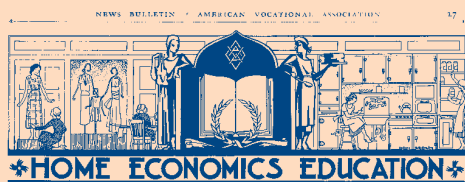
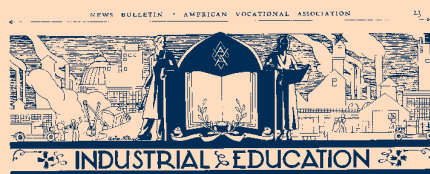
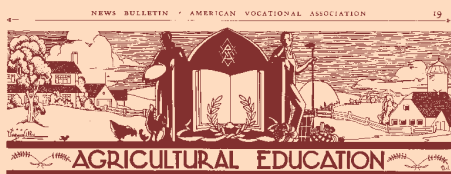
**Howard S. Bennett, the principal of the Rochester Shop School, Rochester, N.Y., became the first life member of the American Vocational Association.**



**The first woman to become a life member of AVA was Adelaide Steele Baylor, chief of the Home Economics Service of the Federal Board for Vocational Education.**

“We know that already many of the professions are over-supplied and it is a fair guess that during the coming generation we shall devote more attention to educating our boys and girls for vocational pursuits which are just as honorable, just as respectable, and in many instances just as remunerative as are the professions themselves.”

—**Franklin D. Roosevelt**



## The Objectives

According to the 1926 Constitution of the American Vocational Association, the objectives of the association were:

- To assume and maintain active national leadership in the promotion of vocational education
- To render service to state or local communities in stabilizing and promoting vocational education
- To provide a national open forum for the discussion of all questions involved in vocational education
- To unite all the vocational education interests of the country through membership representative of the entire country