

History of Retired Maine Educators

The initial step in the formation of a Maine Retired Teachers Association was taken by Dr. E Ward Ireland, the vice president of National Retired Teachers Association and director of Region VII, when he communicated with Dr Clyde Russell suggesting he come to Augusta and present a plan for creating a chapter in Maine. Accordingly, on June 2, 1952, a meeting retired teachers was held in the House of Representatives, State House, Augusta. Twenty-five retired teachers attended did this exploratory meeting.

Dr. Clyde Russell, Secretary of Maine Teachers Association, called the meeting to order. After a few remarks as to the reason for calling the meeting, he turned the meeting over to Dr Ireland who stated that 25 states already had a state association (NRTA had been founded in 1945 by Ethel Percy Andrus.) Ireland commented that the main purpose for organizing is to work as a unit for pensions which retired teachers should receive but do not. After much discussion he asked for a show of hands to ascertain the will of the group, in regard to organizing a State Retired Teachers Association. It was a unanimous vote in favor and the Maine Retired Teachers Association was founded. Clara L Soule was elected president of the new organization.

Clara Lyon Soule

1882-1978

Founder & First President, MRTA, 1952

Miss Soule was born in South Portland. Her family moved to Portland during her early years “because I wanted to be a Portland school teacher,” she later claimed. Graduated from Portland high school, she attended the Portland Training school for teachers and later attended summer sessions at Columbia University Teachers College and Boston University. She also completed extension courses from Harvar, Colby, and Bates colleges.

She began her teaching career in 1902 at Portland Woolson school, later becoming its principal. Soon as she was elected elementary supervisor or the eastern district, which included many children of foreign parentage teaching, both

children and parents how to read and write. Her interest in working with parents and children of foreign extraction was recognized by the city of Portland when it created in 1922 a special position - Director of Americanization - just for Miss Soule. Over the next several years she received nationwide recognition for her work in this field. One former student described her as "the most beloved woman in Portland, a true Christian and a brilliant mind..." In her later teaching years, she was Portland's Director of Reading. She retired in 1950.

Over the next few years, she organized a Cumberland County Chapter of the National Retired Teachers Association and the statewide organization known as Main Retired Teachers Association in served in leadership roles in both. During her lifetime, she took an active role with such bodies as the Portland Teachers Association, Portland Altrusa club, the Beta Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma, the Women's Council of Boston University, Victoria Society of Women, Women Literary Union, National Society for Handicapped Children, and the Board of Managers of the Eunice Frye Home. She was the first woman to be honored with a Portland Kiwanis Club plaque.

she once was quoted by reporter as saying, "there was never a child I did not love, there was never a child I had that I could not see good in. I loved those children." On her retirement in 1950 ,a testimonial dinner was held and attended by persons for more than 15 nationalities. Tthat appears to be evidence that her love was returned.