

Member Communication Experience

Fellows' Perspective: 50 Years of Construction Management and Project Delivery Development

Part 5 – The Early Years of CMAA Chapters

Written by: CMAA College of Fellows Communications Committee

In our [Fellows blog series](#), we've traced how project delivery methods – and CMAA itself – took shape over the past 50 years. This edition shifts the focus to the rise of CMAA's Chapters, beginning with the first nine, the pioneering efforts of which paved the way for the 33 thriving chapters today. Their stories reveal both the challenges they faced and the successes that continue to define CMAA's growth and provide insight to persistent challenges current Chapter Leaders face today.

Future editions will further examine the early development of CMAA Chapters, emphasizing key successes and lessons that inform the continued growth of all 33 chapters.

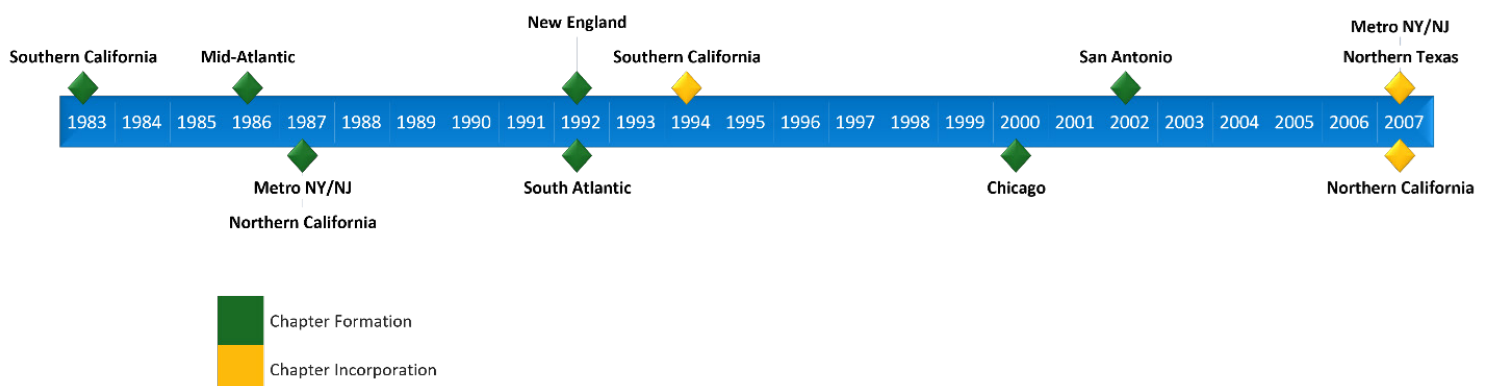
CMAA CHAPTER FORMATION: A HERITAGE OF PERSISTENCE AND BELIEF

The formation of each of the first CMAA Chapters began with an initial idea and was sustained through continued efforts by

its core members. The history of these CMAA Chapters dates back to the early 1980s, reflecting a heritage shaped by those who were involved in the organization's early activities and advancements in construction management before it became widely recognized within the profession.

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE INITIAL CHALLENGES FACED?

- » In Chicago, Brian Fuller formed the first Board and became president. At the same time, Dr. David Arditi led the chapter through tough times that nearly bankrupted it, until Kevin Holt's presidency stabilized finances and revived the community.
- » In New York, Frank Muller and a committed group of believers (Mike Brooks, Bob Bennett, Ron Pennella, and Raoul Ilaw), supported by firms like Parsons, Brinckerhoff,



and URS, established one of the strongest chapters built on collective purpose.

- » Joe McAtee and Tom Driscoll advanced the Mid-Atlantic Chapter by promoting CPM scheduling and securing corporate sponsorships, shaping CMAA's values.
- » The National Capital Chapter prevailed over cashflow challenges as well as bridging the sheer magnitude of members located in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.
- » The New England Chapter overcame competition from other long-standing professional societies and internal financial challenges to prove its relevance among established organizations.
- » Northern California saw stabilization under Steve Wallace and Ken Rice, membership growth thanks to Agnes Weber, governance reforms by Tim Murchison, and virtual program innovations from Carla Collins, transforming it into a leading chapter.
- » In Northern Texas, founders leveraged their contacts to utilize the DFW Airport Code and compliance building as their central meeting location.
- » San Antonio's Chapter emerged from the Henry B. González Convention Center team, gradually broadening its base despite limited PM/CM firms and changes in city services.
- » Roy Beeson and Dick Kennedy founded the South Atlantic Chapter amid national skepticism, later thriving through owner participation under Stacey Chapman.

- » As the first-formed chapter, Southern California required years of persistence and support from pioneering firms to gain credibility and grow into a powerhouse chapter.

These chapters began modestly, overcoming financial challenges and skepticism through committed leadership and supportive firms that recognized the value of construction management. Their efforts established a respected national organization now poised for further expansion.

HOW DID INITIAL CHAPTERS GATHER ENOUGH PEOPLE WITH THE ENERGY AND COMMITMENT TO MAKE THE LAUNCH?

Across the country, chapters began with small groups of dedicated pioneers who leveraged their networks to build momentum. In cities and regions like Chicago, New York, Atlanta, the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and San Antonio, leaders rallied colleagues and industry professionals to lay strong foundations, brick by brick! Owners and public-sector partners provided credibility and attracted support, while meetings and events fostered collaboration and trust.

On the other hand, the National Capital Chapter benefited from two key advantages: representation from several companies engaged with CMAA on the Board of Directors and close proximity to the CMAA national office. However, achieving success required the dedication of prominent leaders, whose exemplary service encouraged increased participation among members.

Successful chapters balanced experienced leaders with new talent, as seen in Atlanta and other chapters, growing by engaging large, established firms and mentoring volunteers. Each region developed distinct approaches, from inclusiveness in the South Atlantic to institutional partnerships in New England and owner involvement in Northern Texas and Southern California. While chapters faced challenges – lean years, financial struggles, and slow progress – they endured because these dedicated leaders remained committed to the growth of the organization while judiciously investing in succession, deliberating mentoring, handing down responsibilities, and placing their trust in new hands. This spirit of continuity transformed fragile beginnings into lasting chapters, each with its own distinctive character, strengths, and regional identities which continue to exist today!



WHAT EFFORTS WERE NEEDED AT FIRST TO KEEP A SMALL GROUP MOTIVATED AND MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

In the beginning, nothing about building a CMAA Chapter was easy. Small groups gathered around coffee tables or in borrowed conference rooms, driven less by numbers than by the persistence of a few determined people. Meetings sometimes drew a crowd, but often they didn't. Roy Beeson still remembers inviting a guest speaker only to find himself sitting with just construction attorney Kamy Molavi and two colleagues from his office in the audience. "It was discouraging," he admitted, but he kept dialing phones, inviting friends and associates, convinced that if he could just get them in the door once, the mission would speak for itself.

Others shared that same sense of stubborn commitment. In Metro NY/NJ, leaders rolled up their sleeves, reaching out to their personal and professional networks while searching for exciting, but relevant program topics that mattered to the industry. In the Mid-Atlantic, Joe McAtee and Tom Driscoll leaned on their network of speakers to spark interest, making *Construction Management Standards of Practice* a centerpiece of the conversation. In New England, leaders had to prove to skeptical firms that sponsorship of CMAA would return value – and they did, step by step.

The National Capital leaders engaged executives from each member company to drive initiatives efficiently. By narrowing priorities to practical goals and forming committees and task forces, they created a shared mission and fostered cross-company relationships.

Northern California's story is rich with names – Kenneth Harms, who rallied members through communication and social meetings; Richard Nedell, who insisted an organization like CMAA was essential; and Robert Flory, who kept the group focused by setting agendas and celebrating each accomplishment. They were fortunate, too, that established west coast-based firms like Harris & Associates threw their weight behind the cause. Together, they kept the flame lit.

Southern California faced its own cycle of fits and starts. Leadership turned over so often that some presidents, like Gary Cardamone, came back for second and third terms simply to keep the chapter alive. Gary's commitment stretched far beyond

the local level, as he would later chair the CMAA National Board, co-found the Chapter Foundation, and was honored as a Fellow in 2011. His story illustrates a truth that many chapters have lived: progress often depended on one or two people willing to carry more than their share while exhibiting a passion for the industry that we all share.

Regardless of the chapter, leaders echoed the same refrain – keeping a small group motivated took constant energy. Communication was everything. Leaders like South Atlantic's Stacey Chapman took a hands-on role, making sure everyone felt supported, while her fellow leader, Henry Gomez, reminded his colleagues that inclusion in decisions made volunteers feel their contributions mattered. These touches of care and persistence kept people coming back to continue to build their chapter.

It was trial and error, too. Chapters experimented with meeting times, locations, and subjects until they struck a chord. Some meetings fell flat, others lit sparks of energy that carried the group for months. In time, chapters began to mature, sometimes by bringing in professional support, as Southern California did, recognizing that volunteer passion could be amplified by structure and continuity.

HOW DID CHAPTERS DEVELOP A CONSENSUS MISSION STATEMENT AMONG A SMALL ORGANIZING GROUP?


Whether in New England or New York, leaders looked to the CMAA National Mission Statement as a guidepost, ensuring local work was firmly tied to the national vision. Others, like in Southern California, found their direction through open dialogue, identifying core values of professionalism, ethics, education, and advocacy that still echo today.

Practical challenges often shaped the journey. In the Mid-Atlantic, mission-building was linked to demonstrating the tangible benefits of construction management in protecting owners' interests and delivering projects on time, within budget, and to the right standards. In the National Capital, a shared interest in the profession among key individuals sparked dialogue and drove initiatives. In Northern California, the spirit of innovation took hold – leaders dared to think outside the box, reshaping bylaws to allow committed officers to remain in roles where they thrived and expanding

beyond the Bay Area to Sacramento. Northern Texas and San Antonio emphasized outreach and education, helping connect managers with the broader industry to build safer, more effective projects.

FINAL THOUGHTS

No matter when these chapters were established (1980s, 1990s, or 2000s), their development followed a similar pattern. Each chapter began with a defined purpose, organized around consistent leadership, addressed various challenges, and achieved gradual progress. The history of these CMAA Chapters is characterized by deliberate actions and ongoing collaboration. This reflects how the profession developed its presence within different communities nationwide — progressing one chapter, leader, and meeting at a time.

In our next edition, we will continue the discussion of early CMAA Chapter development. 



About the Article

The CMAA College of Fellows Blog Series, written by the Communications Committee, will share posts on the development of various project delivery systems over the years and how CMAA emerged and developed in response to changes in construction delivery. The Fellows hope this exploration of the past offers an understanding of the present and may even provide insights into what comes next.

The CMAA College of Fellows Communications Committee includes:

Chris Payne, PE, CCM, FCMAA

Chuck Klunker, FCMAA

Blake Peck, PE, CCM, FCMAA

Robb Gries, PE, CCM, FCMAA

Lisa Sachs, FAIA, CCM, FCMAA

Raoul Ilaw, PE, CCM, FCMAA

Mani Subramanian, CCM FCMAA

Any views and opinions expressed in this article may or may not reflect the views and opinions of the Construction Management Association of America (CMAA). By publishing this piece, CMAA is not expressing endorsement of the individual, the article, or their association, organization, or company.