



Ona Kraft – OCTM's First President

By David Kullman

Ona Kraft was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1888. Her father, Frank Kraft, was a prominent homeopathic physician and an officer of the American Institute of Homeopathy. Her mother served as president of the largest literary club in Cleveland and was recording secretary of the Ohio Federation of Women's Clubs. At age fifteen, Ona enjoyed a trip to Italy with her family.

Miss Kraft graduated from Cleveland's Central High School in the Class of 1905 and enrolled in the College for Women at Western Reserve University. There she earned a Bachelor's degree in 1909 and was elected to membership in Phi Beta Kappa. She is listed as a teacher of algebra and English at Cleveland's East High School in 1915.

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics was organized in Cleveland on February 24, 1920. Although we have been unable to locate a list of charter members, Kraft may very well have been among the 127 mathematics teachers who were present. We do know that she attended the 1946 NCTM Annual Meeting in Cleveland, served two terms on the NCTM Board of Directors (1946 – 1950), and was a member of the 1952 NCTM Officer Nominating Committee. Kraft also had two articles published in *The Mathematics Teacher*: "Methods Used in the Selection of Pupils for the Study of Algebra and Geometry in Cleveland" appeared in May 1946, and a note on "Fourth Term Algebra" can be found in the December 1951 issue.

Kraft was elected to membership in the American Mathematical Society in 1928, while still teaching at East High School. This is significant because that organization focuses primarily on mathematical research, rather than secondary school teaching. She was also active in the Central Association of Science and Mathematics Teachers (now the School Science and Mathematics Association). Her paper, "Providing a Challenging Program in Science and Mathematics for Pupils of Superior Mental Ability," was presented at the November 1951 CASMT convention in Cleveland and published in *School Science and Mathematics* the following February.

Dr. Harold P. Fawcett invited twelve mathematics teachers to a meeting at the Faculty Club of The Ohio State University on November 4, 1950 to consider the formation of an Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Kraft, having just completed her terms on the NCTM Board of Directors, and now teaching at Collinwood High School in Cleveland, was elected as temporary Secretary of the new organization until regular officers could be elected the following spring.

Kraft chaired the Publicity Committee for the first annual OCTM Conference, held at OSU's University School on April 20-21, 1951. They wrote to all NCTM members living in Ohio, urging them to come to the April meeting. The theme of this conference was "functional mathematics," and Kraft chaired a discussion group for senior high school teachers. During the business meeting on Saturday she was elected as OCTM's first President. (An excerpt from her handwritten minutes is shown below.) Her term was for only one year (1951 – 1952), but succeeding presidents would serve for two years, as specified in the first OCTM Constitution, adopted at the 1952 annual business meeting.

In February 1952 President Kraft inaugurated an *OCTM Newsletter*, including a column: "The President Speaks." In it she expressed confidence that the organization would "grow and serve Ohio teachers for many years." She also noted factors that had made the first year's work difficult, and summarized the purposes of a statewide organization for mathematics teachers. She closed with an invitation to attend the upcoming April meeting in Columbus "and help make our council the voice of Ohio Teachers in Mathematics."

Ona Kraft died in Cleveland on February 2, 1971. She was a statewide and national mathematics education leader and a strong advocate for providing students with challenging mathematical experiences at appropriate levels.

First Annual Spring Conference at Columbus,
April 21, 1951. Business Session.

The first annual business session of the Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics was held following the convention luncheon at 1:15 P.M. on Saturday, April 21, 1951. Dr. Herschel E. Trime, President, presided.

Since this first meeting was arranged entirely by the thirteen members of the organization committee, those who attended the conference were asked to approve the present arrangements, or suggest different ones. It was voted to have the next annual meeting in Columbus, consisting of a Friday evening and Saturday meeting during April 1952, the exact time to be selected later.

Oscar Schaaf, chairman of the nominating committee, presented the following candidates for officers for the coming year:

President	Miss Ona Kraft, Collinwood High School, Cleveland
Vice President	Miss Mildred Keiffer, Cincinnati
Secretary	Mr. James MacRearis, Audubon Junior High School, Cleveland
Treasurer	Mr. Howard Barcus, Grandview High School, Columbus

Since no other nominations were made from the floor, the candidates were declared elected.