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| History of the AATSP |
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| **The American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese** was born during a time of great ferment in the United States and the rest of the world. During the second decade of the 20th century times were troubled economically in the U.S., war was brewing in Europe, and Americans were beginning to struggle with thoughts of universal education and a greater place for America in the world community. Latin and Greek were still dominant in the American curriculum, with French and German not far behind. Spanish was a very distant also-ran and Portuguese did not exist in the American curriculum except in a few Eastern universities.  American isolationism gave Spanish a boost when German was dropped from many schools during the First World War. Spanish became the language of choice, not through any love of the language, but for simple expediency. Many of the teachers knew very little Spanish, but they were pressed into teaching it to save their jobs. So Spanish developed a constituency and a foothold in American education, but for unattractive and unsatisfactory reasons.  In the midst of difficult times in the nation and in the world, the **American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese** was founded 29 December 1917 in New York City as the American Association of Teachers of Spanish. The name was changed to the present one when Portuguese was added to the association’s mission in 1944. The **AATSP** came about through the efforts of Lawrence A. Wilkins, Director of Foreign Languages in the New York Public Schools and a number of other individuals teaching in colleges, universities, and high schools along the Eastern Seaboard. From the very beginning, the intention — and the reality — was to have a truly national association. The **AATSP** was the first association in the United States devoted to the study of a specific modern foreign language, pre-dating the AATI (1923), the AATF (1927), and the AATG (1927).  Membership has always been open to teachers of Spanish and Portuguese and all others interested in the languages. Over 90% of the membership is Spanish-oriented, although the Portuguese-oriented segment of the membership is both strong and growing. There are Honorary Members and Fellows who represent, respectively, the world of Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian scholarship and the world of letters.  Over 70 local chapters of the **AATSP** exist in the United States and Canada. The alpha chapter has evolved into Metropolitan New York Chapter, founded in 1916 as the Association of Teachers of Spanish, and becoming the first chapter of the new AATS on 1 January 1917. Some groups are very active with regular meetings and wide-ranging cultural and pedagogical programs. Others usually meet in conjunction with the state language association and sponsor the National Spanish Examination and a few other activities. Most nominations for national officers emanate from chapters so membership and participation are important. Many lasting friendships and professional acquaintances have been made through **AATSP** chapters and participation seems to be growing.  From the beginning, ***Hispania***, the association journal was envisioned as a first-class scholarly publication and also as a source of practical advice for classroom teachers. It has steadily grown in prestige and has had 12 editors through the years; the present editor is Sheri Spaine Long, United States Air Force Academy/University of Alabama at Birmingham.  An Annual Meeting has been held each year since 1917 with the exception of two years during World War II when government restrictions prohibited such gatherings. Each Annual Meeting contains a plethora of sessions of wider or narrower interest, numerous workshops for members, and many social activities designed to augment the camaraderie of members. Recent meetings have been held in Costa Rica, San Diego, San Francisco, San Juan, Madrid, Cancún, Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York. The 2002 meeting was held in Rio de Janeiro, the first one in a Portuguese-speaking country.  Various auxiliaries have been founded throughout the history of the **AATSP** and most survive and thrive today. The **Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica** was established in 1952, after some initial moves by a group of New York teachers who started Pan American Clubs and a group of Miami teachers who first organized an honor group on a local basis, subsequently petitioning the **AATSP** for official recognition. It has long published an official newsletter for its sponsors, *¡Albricias!* There are well over a thousand chapters and the number of initiates grows each year. A club for elementary and middle school students, the **Sociedad Hispánica de Amistad**, was formed in 2001. Judith Park directs the SHH and Pamela Wink directs the newest organization.  One of the most signal services the **AATSP** offers to secondary school teachers is the **National Spanish Examination**. Offered each spring, it is often the chief activity of local **AATSP** chapters. The initial mechanisms for the examinations were established by Sol Saporta of Indiana University in the early 50s. In 1954, Harry T. Charly assumed leadership of the NSE, a post he held for 23 years. The current Director of the NSE is Kevin Cessna-Buscemi of Valparaiso, IN. The number of students taking the exam is at an all-time high.  The **AATSP** was a founding member of the Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Language and International Studies. NCLIS lobbies for languages at the national level. The Executive Director of both groups is J. David Edwards, who maintains a Washington office and presence for us, the other AATs, the MLA, and various other groups concerned with the promotion of languages in the United States.  The **AATSP** has sponsored many and varied projects through the years. This has included numerous publications concerned with the teaching of Spanish and Portuguese. The latest series of these publications was produced in conjunction with Thomson Learning, a division of Heinle and Heinle. There has been a pedagogical Consultant since 1965. There have been Study Abroad Conferences at irregular intervals since 1978. **AATSP** members serve on numerous committees, including those charged with Nominations, Projects and Development, Public Relations, Scholarships and Awards, Honorary Members and Fellows, General Membership, and many more.  Language departments in both secondary schools and in higher education have traditionally been more open to women than has been the case in many disciplines; the **AATSP** has been no exception. Although the first 11 presidents were men, Vesta E. Condon became the first woman president in 1933 and subsequent presidents and members of the Executive Council have been quite evenly divided between men and women, as well as between representatives of higher education and those of K-12 schools. In 2003 the President, Editor, and Executive Director are all women. Democratic governance has long been a hallmark of the **AATSP**.  The **AATSP** has been people-oriented and it has served its members for more than 90 years. Today it is a vibrant and vigorous association, with a renowned journal, fine intellectual and financial assets, a modest endowment, a free-standing corporate office directed by a full-time language professional, good will on the part of its members, and great respect from its sister groups. **AATSP** national and international members represent primary, secondary, and university teachers, professors, and administrators as well as other professionals who support Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian languages and cultures. It is probably the largest organization in the world devoted to individual languages, although that claim would be hard to prove conclusively.  Ever looking toward the future, the **AATSP** invites all teachers of Spanish and Portuguese and all those interested in those languages to become members and to share in the great task of fomenting the study of Spanish and Portuguese wherever its members live and work. |