



THE FIRST KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION SETS THE ORGANIZATION'S DIRECTION

Perhaps nowhere else in the history of Kiwanis is there reflected more evidence of changing times and changing attitudes than in the story of the organization's International conventions. Early sessions reflected the understandable need to set up a better structure for the organization to ensure its success. But over the years, fellowship became more and more prominent, and elaborate programs of entertainment were eagerly anticipated by convention-goers.

Early in the organization's history, convention sites were rotated among established Kiwanis regions, but by the 1950s it became evident that only a limited number of cities could host a Kiwanis International convention. Now made four to five years in advance, the selection of a convention city focuses more on available facilities and the interest and extent of support to be found in local Kiwanis clubs, the city, and local convention officials.

Historic Highlights

- 1916 -- The first convention, May 18-19, in Cleveland, Ohio, unified the founding clubs into "The National Kiwanis Club," and a Constitution was approved. George F. Hixson was elected to the first of his two terms as President of the National Kiwanis Club. Later that year, headlines would proclaim "Kiwaniis Becomes International," when the Kiwanis Club of Hamilton, Ontario, was organized on November 1.
- 1919 -- Kiwanis declared its independence in Birmingham, Alabama.

In a wave of check writing, attendees raised \$17,500 in one-half hour to buy Kiwanis from founder Allen Browne.

- 1922 -- The first convention staged outside the United States was in Toronto, Ontario.
- 1924 — Kiwanis' six permanent Objects were adopted during the convention in Denver, Colorado. During the same convention, the first song was written for Kiwanis. George Sanford Holmes, president of the Kiwanis Club of Denver, wrote the words to *Onward in Kiwanis* for the convention that year.

Music and other forms of entertainment always have been key elements of Kiwanis conventions. Past appearances have included Bob Hope, Bill Cosby, Debbie Reynolds, and Jay Leno.

By the 9th Annual International Convention, prominent speakers were invited to address the conventions on non-Kiwanis topics. Through Kiwanis' history, these speakers have included the Honorable Angus MacDonald, premier of Nova Scotia (1934); US Federal Bureau of Investigation Director, J. Edgar Hoover (1936); US Vice-President Richard Nixon; Christian evangelist Dr. Billy Graham; Roman Catholic Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen; TV personality Art Linkletter, and US President Ronald Reagan.

- 1927 -- Efforts to provide educational opportunities began with the convention in Memphis, Tennessee. Various forums, workshops, and other instructional sessions have been provided over the years.
- 1935 — The first nationwide broadcast of a Kiwanis convention was aired by the Columbia Network across the US by KTSA in San Antonio, Texas.
- 1943 – The only interruption in annual

conventions came when World War II made it necessary to substitute an International Council meeting for the convention. A small administrative convention was conducted in 1944 with limited attendance. In 1945, the International Council again conducted the necessary business, but in 1946, Kiwanis resumed its regular convention operation. With nearly 10,000 people present, the Atlantic City, New Jersey convention of that year broke all previous convention attendance records.

- 1961 – Delegates in Toronto, Ontario, Canada adopted one of the most important resolutions in the history of Kiwanis: “Resolved, we favor the establishment of Kiwanis clubs in other countries in addition to Canada and the United States.”
- 1983 – For the first time in its history, Kiwanis International stages its annual convention outside the US and Canada – in Vienna, Austria. The entertainment at the closing session included artists who performed in superb solos, duets, and group renditions. Kiwanis would return to Europe in 1993 with its 78th Annual Convention in Nice, France.

- 1987 – The House of Delegates in Washington, DC, eliminated gender as a qualification for membership in all Kiwanis clubs.

Regardless of programs, speakers, and Kiwanis business, the most important concern is always the inspiring effect the convention has on those attending. Many Kiwanians have said that they never truly appreciated the vast scope of their organization until they attended their first International convention. Almost everyone – whether a Kiwanian, a spouse, guest, son, or daughter – experiences a great thrill of unity and accomplishment when, at the convention’s close, thousands join hands to sing *Auld Lang Syne*. Then, the President sounds the Kiwanis gong and proclaims, “This convention of Kiwanis International is adjourned.”

KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

| <u>Location</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Attendance</u> |
|--|-------------|--------------------|
| Cleveland, Ohio | 1916 | Unavailable |
| Detroit, Michigan | 1917 | “ “ |
| Providence, Rhode Island | 1918 | “ “ |
| Birmingham, Alabama | 1919 | “ “ |
| Portland, Oregon | 1920 | “ “ |
| Cleveland, Ohio | 1921 | “ ” |
| Toronto, Ontario | 1922 | 4,260 |
| Atlanta, Georgia | 1923 | 3,854 |
| Denver, Colorado | 1924 | 3,373 |
| St. Paul, Minnesota | 1925 | 4,459 |
| Montreal, Quebec | 1926 | 5,248 |
| Memphis, Tennessee | 1927 | 4,062 |
| Seattle, Washington | 1928 | 4,510 |
| Milwaukee, Wisconsin | 1929 | 4,500 |
| Atlantic City, New Jersey | 1930 | 4,228 |
| Miami, Florida | 1931 | 3,511 |
| Detroit, Michigan | 1932 | 2,529 |
| Los Angeles, California | 1933 | 2,790 |
| Toronto, Ontario | 1934 | 2,582 |
| San Antonio, Texas | 1935 | 2,708 |
| Washington, D.C. | 1936 | 4,037 |
| Indianapolis, Indiana | 1937 | 4,009 |
| San Francisco, California | 1938 | 4,056 |
| Boston, Massachusetts | 1939 | 4,129 |
| Minneapolis, Minnesota | 1940 | 4,188 |
| Atlanta, Georgia | 1941 | 5,325 |
| Cleveland, Ohio | 1942 | 5,724 |
| Wartime Conference, Chicago, Illinois | 1943 | Limited Attendance |
| Convention and Wartime Conference, Chicago, Illinois | 1944 | “ “ |
| Wartime Council, Chicago, Illinois | 1945 | “ “ |
| Atlantic City, New Jersey | 1946 | 9,855 |
| Chicago, Illinois | 1947 | 9,800 |
| Los Angeles, California | 1948 | 12,544 |
| Atlantic City, New Jersey | 1949 | 8,856 |
| Miami, Florida | 1950 | 9,765 |
| St. Louis, Missouri | 1951 | 11,316 |
| Seattle, Washington | 1952 | 11,412 |
| New York, New York | 1953 | 12,644 |
| Miami, Florida | 1954 | 10,040 |
| Cleveland, Ohio | 1955 | 12,086 |
| San Francisco, California | 1956 | 13,452 |
| Atlantic City, New Jersey | 1957 | 13,354 |
| Chicago, Illinois | 1958 | 12,493 |
| Dallas, Texas | 1959 | 13,100 |
| Miami Beach, Florida | 1960 | 15,166 |
| Toronto, Ontario | 1961 | 18,313 |
| Denver, Colorado | 1962 | 16,855 |

(Continued)

| <u>Location</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Attendance</u> |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Atlantic City, New Jersey | 1963 | 16,447 |
| Los Angeles, California | 1964 | 16,142 |
| New York, New York | 1965 | 18,396 |
| Portland, Oregon | 1966 | 14,371 |
| Houston, Texas | 1967 | 15,195 |
| Toronto, Ontario | 1968 | 17,830 |
| Miami Beach, Florida | 1969 | 19,106 |
| Detroit, Michigan | 1970 | 15,787 |
| San Francisco, California | 1971 | 16,413 |
| Atlantic City, New Jersey | 1972 | 15,750 |
| Montreal, Quebec | 1973 | 17,843 |
| Denver, Colorado | 1974 | 18,104 |
| Atlanta, Georgia | 1975 | 19,959 |
| San Diego, California | 1976 | 18,140 |
| Dallas, Texas | 1977 | 16,788 |
| Miami Beach, Florida | 1978 | 14,854 |
| Toronto, Ontario | 1979 | 18,101 |
| Anaheim, California | 1980 | 15,995 |
| New Orleans, Louisiana | 1981 | 16,538 |
| Minneapolis, Minnesota | 1982 | 15,424 |
| Vienna, Austria | 1983 | 10,000 |
| Phoenix, Arizona | 1984 | 11,403 |
| Toronto, Ontario | 1985 | 12,271 |
| Houston, Texas | 1986 | 9,593 |
| Washington, DC | 1987 | 12,164 |
| Seattle, Washington | 1988 | 11,746 |
| Orlando, Florida | 1989 | 12,486 |
| St. Louis, Missouri | 1990 | 11,788 |
| Anaheim, California | 1991 | 12,589 |
| Indianapolis, Indiana | 1992 | 10,864 |
| Nice, France | 1993 | 6,897 |
| New Orleans, Louisiana | 1994 | 12,699 |
| Las Vegas, Nevada | 1995 | 13,823 |
| Salt Lake City, Utah | 1996 | 10,562 |
| Nashville, Tennessee | 1997 | 13,603 |
| Montreal, Quebec | 1998 | 10,685 |
| Denver, Colorado | 1999 | 10,544 |
| Miami Beach, Florida | 2000 | 8,202 |
| Taipei, Taiwan, ROC | 2001 | 10,073 |
| New Orleans, Louisiana | 2002 | 9,474 |
| Indianapolis, Indiana | 2003 | 6,941 |
| St. Louis, Missouri | 2004 | 6,253 |
| Honolulu, Hawaii | 2005 | |
| Rome, Italy | 2006 | |
| San Antonio, Texas | 2007 | |
| Orlando, Florida | 2008 | |
| Nashville, Tennessee | 2009 | |
| Las Vegas, Nevada | 2010 | |

Source: *Dimensions of Service, The Kiwanis Story*
by L.A. "Larry" Hapgood.