



Looking Back: “Support for Theatre”



Mary Ellen Burgess, who was remarkable in the history of high-school drama in Saskatchewan

From the late 1930s until the end of the 1960s, the Association supported high-school drama in the province. Theatre contests were part of Association conventions starting in 1939 when the Milliken Shield, donated by Executive member Ethel L. Milliken, was first awarded. Mary Ellen Burgess is another notable figure in the history of theatre, credited as a force behind improving the competition standard over more than 20 years, after she began adjudicating eliminations in 1941.

Charles W. McCool, Association president from 1944-45 and then its secretary-treasurer, donated a trophy first presented to festival winners in 1947. The McCool Memorial Trophy was awarded until 1964. The competitive aspect of the festival was discontinued in 1965. Drama ceased to be a part of conventions in 1966, though Association financial support continued until 1969.

The Association worked with numerous organizations in promoting drama competitions over the years, including the Department of Education, the University of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Drama League. While the role with theatre is now a chapter for the history books, the Association continues to work closely with a broad range of partners to support the achievement of students.