

Celebrating 50 years of IEEE ENCS: 1965 – 2015

In 2015, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the IEEE Eastern North Carolina Section. ENCS started out as a subsection of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers' North Carolina Section, which was founded in Charlotte in 1929. In November of 1965, the Eastern North Carolina Subsection became a standalone section, and today constitutes the largest IEEE section in the state.

In this article, we will look at the history of the ancestors of today's IEEE Eastern North Carolina Section – the American Institute of Electrical Engineers (AIEE), and the Institute of Radio Engineers (IRE). In future articles, we will learn how IEEE ENCS evolved as a professional organization, and how the student branches at area universities developed.

The American Institute of Electrical Engineers- 1884



The AIEE was founded in 1884, at a time when the light bulb and the telephone were new inventions, and the primary communications medium was the telegraph. Realizing that the new electrical industry was experiencing rapid growth, an engineer named Nathaniel Keith wrote a letter to the *Electrical World* journal in April 1884 recommending that a “national electrical society” be established. His letter attracted the attention of the leading figures in the electrical industry, including Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell, who would later serve as officers of the organization. The AIEE was formally established in May 1884, and held its first technical meeting in October of the same year.

While many of its earliest members were telegraph engineers, the AIEE soon began to play an important role in the development of the electrical power industry, as power grids spread across the United States. In the 1890s, the AIEE began to focus on standardization, and formed its first standards committee.

The Institute of Radio Engineers- 1912



Guglielmo Marconi's first transmission of signals across the Atlantic in 1901, together with the invention of the vacuum tube in the early 1900's, created great interest in the “hot” new field of “wireless,” or radio. A group of engineers got together in New York City in 1912 to form the Institute of Radio Engineers to focus on the new technology. Radio broadcasting grew rapidly in the 1920's, and in 1930, Dr. Lee deForest, inventor of the vacuum tube, became president of the IRE.

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers - 1963



IEEE

Both the AIEE and the IRE began to focus on the field of electronics in the 1940's and 1950's as new technologies, including television and computers, began to emerge. Recognizing that they had much in common, the two

organizations merged in 1963 to form today's Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. Today, IEEE is the world's largest professional organization, with over 430,000 members worldwide.

Do you have an IEEE Story to Share?

We would like to hear from ENCS members who have stories to share about their experiences as IEEE members. We'd like to know when, where, and why you joined, how IEEE membership has benefitted you, and any other stories you would like to share. If you have a story to share, please contact Tom Jepsen at tjepsen@ieee.org.

Want to learn more?

To learn more about the history of IEEE, see the *IEEE Global History Network* at <http://www.ieeeahn.org/wiki/index.php/Special:Home>

This Month's History Question

Do you know when the first electric lights appeared in North Carolina? And do you know when electric lighting was first used in Raleigh?

(Answers will appear in the next ENCS Newsletter)

Tom Jepsen 2/20/2015