

Bygone Years



Photo prepared by Mary Catherine Adams

While cleaning out an old storage area, we happened on this photograph from the APS spring meeting in 1910, held at the campus of the National Bureau of Standards in Washington, DC. There are 74 people in the picture, none of whom we can identify. Society membership stood at roughly 500, so allowing for attendees who may not have made the picture, the meeting drew between 15 and 20% of the membership, about what the March Meeting does today. The NBS hosted many APS meetings over the years, annually from 1907 to 1941, and again from 1948 to 1965. In that year, NBS moved from Washington to Gaithersburg, MD, leaving APS to find other venues for its meetings.

One can learn several things about the effects of the passage of time from this picture. For one thing, it's been a long time since all the attendees at an APS general meeting could be assembled for a single group photo. For another, it's been a long time since the attendees at an APS meeting were uniformly white and male. And finally, it's been a long time since the expected attire for meeting attendees was a suit, white shirt, and tie.