

IEEE CENTENNIAL: 100 YEARS IN THE MAKING FOR TORONTO SECTION

By Phill Feltham

Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell were among the twenty-five names of the founders of the AIEE, in 1884 in Philadelphia. The IEEE was formed in 1963 by the merger of American Institute of Electrical Engineers (AIEE), founded in 1884, and the Institute of Radio Engineers (IRE), founded in 1912. The IRE in turn was the result of a merger of two largely local radio organizations (Society of Wireless Telegraph Engineers, initiated in Boston in 1907, and Wireless Institute, founded in New York in 1909). AIEE Toronto Section was formed on September 30, 1903 at the Engineers Club in Toronto and was the first section to be formed outside of the United States.

Now, fast forward 100 years to Toronto, and October 4, 2003. The IEEE Toronto Section, as it's now known, will celebrate its Centennial. The celebration will take place at the Marriott Bloor Yorkville Hotel — an important milestone in its century-long history.

The festivities for this landmark, however, started earlier this year.

In April, there was a Centennial Lecture given by Professor Andreas Antoniou about the Origins of DSP (digital signal processing).

Then, on May 3rd at the annual

IEEE Canada Board meeting in Montreal, IEEE Canada President Mo El-Hawary presented Toronto Section Chair Bob Hanna with the IEEE Centennial banner. And earlier this summer, Dr Hanna gave a brief presentation at the IEEE PES Conference in Toronto outlining the section's achievements and Centennial celebrations.

Hundreds of IEEE members are expected to flood into the Marriott Bloor Yorkville Hotel for the Centennial event.

It's that thought in mind that's put the pressure on IEEE Toronto Section members. They've been hard at work preparing for the rapidly approaching Centennial. Pelle Westlind, IEEE Toronto Section Secretary would only give hints to the evening festivities to ensure no surprises were spoiled, other than to say there would be a dinner.

The annual section evening will be combined with the IEEE Canada dinner that is associated with their semi-annual Board meeting. This creates the opportunity for IEEE members and fellow engineers to meet the section chairs from across Canada, and the other members of the IEEE Canada leadership team to join in recognizing the beginnings of institute activity in Toronto and Canada.

What's been made public by the IEEE Toronto Section in the last few



Pelle Westlind, IEEE Toronto Section Secretary and Robert Hanna, Toronto Section President hold the Section's IEEE Centennial banner.

months is the award ceremony that will take place during the dinner. A number of members will be honored with an IEEE Centennial Medal. "These are members who have contributed significantly to the success of the Toronto Section," said Pelle Westlind.

IEEE Toronto Section Scholarships will also be recognized at the Centennial. These scholarships will be named in honor of those hardworking members who have spent endless hours making IEEE a productive learning environment for engineering students, new graduates and professionals.

"To teach, motivate, innovate, and encourage young engineers, these significant few made a tremendous difference

to IEEE, IEEE Canada and the Toronto Section,” he said. “We are proud to have them as peers.”

A select few IEEE Section members who have been given IEEE Fellow status in the centennial year will also be recognized at the award ceremony. This distinction is conferred by the Board of Directors upon a person with an extraordinary record of accomplishments in any of the IEEE fields of interest.

“Only a few IEEE members achieve the distinction of IEEE fellow,” Westlund said. “A number of our Section members have earned this distinction during the centennial year and we will honor them at the ceremony.”

Also, IEEE member Dr. Tas Venetsanopoulos will be awarded the McNaughton Medal, the highest honor for IEEE Canada.

A LITTLE HISTORY

On September 30, 1903, the Toronto Section was formed with four other sections in Boston, Philadelphia, Schenectady, St. Louis and Washington, some of which are celebrating their centennials as well. IEEE Toronto is the first section to be formed outside the U.S.

During this period, the AIEE (American Institute of Electrical Engineers) was still in its cocoon stage. It had started six years earlier in 1884 by Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell. The major interests of the AIEE were wire communications and light and power systems.

Subsequently, in 1912, another organization, the IRE (Institute of Radio Engineers) was formed to cater to engineers interested in the expanding radio industry. Many of the members of the IRE, however, were also members of the AIEE.

Many of the activities within both organizations were closely knitted together. As a result, the AIEE and IRE merged in 1963 to form IEEE. IEEE Canada was created in 1994 with ties to both IEEE and another engineering group, the Engineering Institute of Canada (EIC).

IEEE Toronto is the largest section in Canada today with 3,500 members. For the past three years (2001 - 2003), it has received the Sustained Section Membership Growth Award.

The Power Engineering group was the first chapter to be established within

the Toronto Section, one year after the AIEE-IRE merger.

IN THE SPEAKER'S CHAIR

In November, the seventy-ninth chair will be elected for the Toronto Section. The current chair, Bob Hanna, has been with the IEEE Toronto Section for the last 22 years. In January 2000, he was elected Vice Chair. In 2002, Hanna moved up to take the reigns as chair.

“It’s a very humbling and rewarding experience when I see myself chairing an organization that has been in existence for 100 years,” he said. “Looking at some of the past names, I try to think how they planted the seed for this organization, and how they built it and brought it together over the years.”

Come December 31st, Bob Hanna’s time as Toronto Section chair will come to an end and a new chair will move in to continue Hanna’s legacy.

“I give enormous credit to all the past chairs and their excellent work,” he said. “They have really laid the grass roots of this organization.”

“I am, more or less, picking and choosing, building on some of their

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strengths to reflect the changes in time because some of the things that were put into place are no longer applicable.” Hanna made reference to the IEEE Toronto Section website and the email newsletter that wasn’t available when J.L. Krammerer became the first Toronto Chair in 1903.

Hanna has been nominated to be the IEEE Region 7 Delegate-Elect/Director-Elect, 2004-2005. So, come January 1st, Bob Hanna might have bigger shoes to fill if he’s elected Chair for IEEE Canada.

Pelle Westlind, Secretary of the IEEE Toronto Section, had nothing but excellent praises for Hanna.

“He is a born leader and a true professional in his field.”



“We will hear much more about Dr. Robert Hanna in the years to come.”

Tickets for the Centennial banquet will be \$75 (\$50 for Life members). Be sure to purchase tickets early to avoid the disappointment of being left out of the festivities. Deadline for ticket sales is September 15th. For more information on the IEEE Toronto Section Centennial banquet on October 4th at the Marriott Bloor Yorkville Hotel, contact Section secretary, Pelle Westlind: Tel: 416.234.0777, or email: pelle.westlind@ieee.org.

OTHER IEEE BIRTHDAYS

Electricity Today would like to make an honorable mention of other IEEE Organizations celebrating their Centennials or their 100 years of service to the electrical industry: the IEEE Philadelphia Section, the IEEE Boston Section, the IEEE Washington Section, the IEEE Schenectady Section and the IEEE St. Louis. **ET**