

# History of the MIM

*from its inception  
as told to Betty Stansbury Young  
and Dan Zechmeister  
by JR Snyder*

*"It was a cold night  
in January of 1956,"  
recalls JR Snyder  
vividly, still with  
fire in his eyes  
some 45 years later.*

"After ten years as a good mason, I joined the International Union of Bricklayers in 1948. I had attended the monthly Detroit Mason Contractors Association (DMCA) meetings for three years and never said a word. I was now 32 years old, married to a beautiful woman who gave me 4 sons and 2 daughters (by that time, with 5 more sons to come). I had served as a radio operator in the Amphibious Force in WW II and was now a mason contractor.

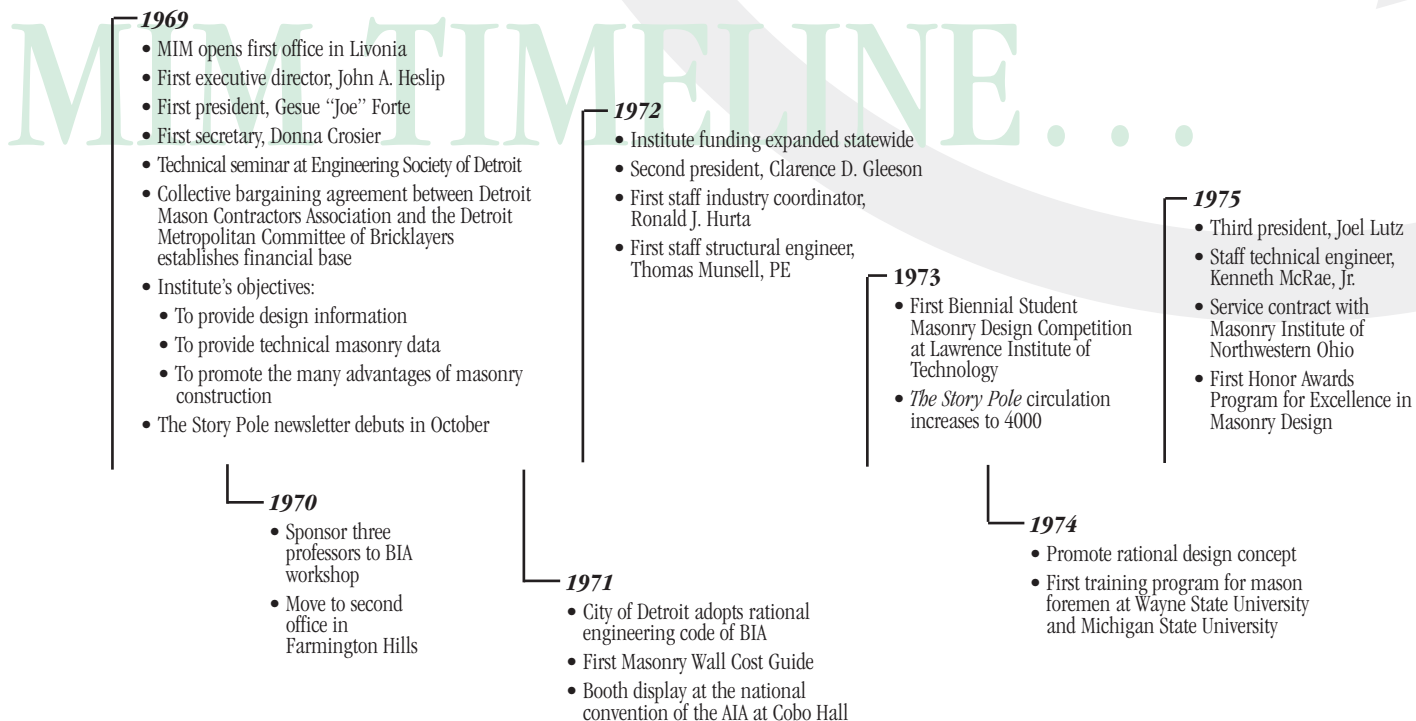
"Ted Vane, Vane-Stecker Construction, was DMCA president. Tony Leto, Leto Construction Co., Clarence Gleeson, Sr., Clarence Gleeson, Inc., Chub White, W. W. White Co., Charles Fromm, William Bortolotti, William Bortolotti & Sons and Rudy Kanfer, Kanfer Construction were contractor members. Supplier members at that time included Belden Stark Brick Co., Borin Builders Supply, Inc., Century Brick Co., Contractors Machinery, Detroit Cut Stone, Fendt Builders Supply, Frederic Stevens, Inc., Hay-Con

Tile Co., Horn Fuel & Supply Co., Huron Portland Cement Co., John A. Mercier Brick Co., Peerless Cement Co., Schuster Equipment and Standard Building Products Co.

"This January night, Vane announced the DMCA had decided to fold the group. We were told the Mason Contractors Association would take us in one at a time. I got mad. I stood up and talked for the first time. We needed a good association."

It was then that Clarence Gleeson Sr. nominated Snyder as president. During the next six years he served as president. "The first thing we did was to negotiate the contract. The Associated General Contractors (AGC) had always negotiated the Yellow Book agreement for all subs. We wanted our own agreement favorable to the mason contractor and began the Red Book. From that point, every reputable independent union mason contractor recognized the Red Book as the contract of choice. All the independents signed the Red Book agreement.

"That first year, the DMCA grew from eight contractors to 85, including smaller generals who did their own masonry. In 1957, 19 of us went to Washington, DC to the Mason Contractors Association of America annual meeting. There we got the idea from Ideal Masonry out of St. Louis, MO to form a promotional group. By 1958, the Masonry Institute was born, the first such state institute in the country. The Institute's objective was to promote and sponsor programs to familiarize architects, owners, builders and the general public with the advantages of using masonry units in building construction.



## History of the MIM continued

"AGC turned down support of the Masonry Institute. We hired Harry Shiffman in 1959 as a PR man to promote masonry to the architects. We began to participate in meetings with architects, school boards, city officials. We distributed literature to disseminate information on masonry. We participated in public service projects and instituted architectural competitions for masonry construction. Members exhibited at architectural meetings and public functions such as the Builders Show and at the State Fair grounds. We worked with Lawrence Institute of Technology for many years. We worked with architectural firms on details, materials, walls, parapets, control joints, expansion joints, etc. and met with manufacturers on testing materials. We advertised in local architectural trade publications and local newspapers and obtained *free space* in papers.

"In those first 11 years, the meetings were in my home on Vaughn. We would meet 30 - 50 times a year. That was a lot of dedication and commitment from a strong and visionary group of men. The Masonry Institute was entirely subsidized by individual companies.

"In 1962, the DMCA negotiated with the bricklayers union 2¢/hour/bricklayer to be used for masonry promotion."

In 1967, the Masonry Institute hired John Heslip, former Saginaw mason contractor and

masonry product manager with Huron Cement Division, National Gypsum Co., Detroit, as its first Executive Director and opened its own office on West Eight Mile Road in Livonia as a branch of the DMCA.

Snyder admits to doing things no one else would do and to giving 100% to everything he has done. As a youngster, when he was playing sandlot football 365 days/year, his dream was to be the head football coach for the University of Notre Dame. Although he never realized that dream - that same commitment to lead, to win and to team concept energized the Masonry Institute. He has built many a team, including the world champion Snyder softball club, holding back-to-back US Slo Pitch Softball Association world titles. Another famous Snyder team JR Snyder can certainly be credited for is his team of two daughters and nine sons, eight of whom have followed him into the masonry industry, with Jerry, Jon, Jeff, Judd and Justin in Michigan, Jay in Florida, Jim in Texas and Joe in Pennsylvania. Jack is a computer analyst in Michigan. Jerry, Jon, Jeff and Jay are members of MIM. Jerry and Jon have served on the MIM Board, perpetuating Snyder leadership.

The original incorporators were Robert Coates, Robert Ebeling, Gesue Forte, Clary Gleeson, Dwight Lewis and James R. Snyder.

Under the directorship of John Heslip, members were encouraged to support the Institute by becoming more knowledgeable about masonry.

The Institute encouraged supporting the architect-contractor relationship by providing literature and technical assistance on both theoretical and practical issues.

Heslip announced the Institute, which began as a Detroit-area operation, was expanding to outstate Michigan.

By 1974, the focus was on intensifying the promotion of masonry as *the* preferred building material. The Institute was also working to protect the interests of both mason contractors and bricklayers in the development of the new state legislation which was to eventually supplant OSHA. Concern for the nation's energy supplies called upon designers to become more energy conscious and efficient. Masonry materials' insulating values began to be designed into building wall systems. In an attempt to help contractors with their sales effort, the Institute began a marketing program.

A major emphasis was on contractor and bricklayer education. A foreman training program was initiated to provide the latest techniques in supervising and guiding their work forces. The American Appraisal Company study proved cost advantages of loadbearing masonry based on initial construction cost. The Institute announced the "M factor" is coming, a concept that goes beyond the traditional "U factor" to include the thermal mass of a building.

## MIM TIMELINE

### 1976

- Revise By-Laws, expanding Board of Trustees
- First M-Awards banquet in Troy
- Develop A/E programs
- Annual scholarship named in honor of James R. Snyder
- Establish Masonry Council
- Sponsor joint display at Michigan Society of Architects convention
- Sponsor M-Day seminars

### 1977

- Masonry Council sponsors statewide seminars
- Publish *Recommended Practices for the Specifications of Fire Resistance Ratings*

### 1979

- Ten year anniversary in April
- Brick veneer/metal stud seminars in Detroit and Lansing
- Multi-Family Advisory Committee of the Ohio/Michigan Masonry Council seminar on raising fire standards
- Sponsor seven state educators to attend Masonry Workshop at Notre Dame
- Second Structural Masonry Design course at Lawrence Institute of Technology
- Award three architectural scholarships
- M-Day seminar on building restoration
- MIM moves to Farmington, third location
- Masonry course begins at University of Michigan
- Twelve students awarded in the Biennial Student Design Competition
- Staff technical engineer, Richard Wing

### 1978

- Fourth president, Frank J. Soave
- Staff structural engineer, Robert M. Catanzarite, PE
- Annual scholarship named in honor of Robert F. Ebeling
- M-Day seminars on advantages of masonry in fire protection
- Remove and reinstall the State Capitol's building cornerstone
- State's first college course in structural masonry design at LIT

### 1980

- Publish articles on *Passive Solar Home Design*
- Re-elect John Heslip as chairman of ASTM C12 Main Committee on Masonry Mortars
- Masonry supplier contributions increase
- MIM offers Continuing Education Units
- Michigan Construction Safety Standards Commission establishes committee on bracing masonry walls
- Masonry Council promotes fire-resistant construction
- *The Story Pole* circulation increased to 4900
- Mason Contractors Association agrees to provisions for masonry promotion
- John Heslip awarded honorary membership by Detroit Chapter of AIA
- Staff structural engineer, Paul H. Jones

### 1981

- Exhibit at the Home and Flower Show at Cobo Hall
- LIT professor, James A. Abernethy, RA, develops passive solar housing slide program
- Present seminars on passive solar energy in Troy and Lansing
- Erect I-475 brick sound wall in Flint
- International Masonry Institute reorganized and endorsed by the MIM
- Supporting membership was offered to masonry accessory suppliers

## History of the MIM continued

In 1976, a By-Laws change permitted out-state representation on the Institute's Board of Trustees. The goal that year was a bigger share of the construction market for masonry.

*The Story Pole*, the newsletter, was serving as the Institute's major vehicle of communication as well as recording history in the making. The Michigan Masonry Council formed and supported the Institute's efforts in developing a recommended practice for specifying fire ratings of masonry walls.

The Institute continued to work on the development of a statewide marketing profile for the masonry industry.

A series of testimonials was obtained from owners and developers who used masonry successfully. Promotion continued on high-rise masonry construction, masonry for manufacturing buildings and masonry for the interior wall market. Heslip pledged the Institute to give the greatest possible mileage for every promotional dollar through communication with design professionals, technical assistance and other programs designed to get a hearing for masonry in each and every architectural/engineering office in the state.

Promotion continued for commercial/industrial buildings. Efforts continued to upgrade Michigan's building code to require the use of fire resistive materials in multi-family housing. Intensification of programs designed to broaden the organization's base of financial support continued.

Ten years later, the Institute was recognized as a well-organized entity, with one of the nation's most comprehensive and best respected statewide promotional programs representing the entire masonry industry. As the Institute entered its second decade of service, it represented a powerful, effective force to insure that man's oldest building system continued to be a preferred way to build in Michigan. The Institute's forecast for the next five years identified the following key areas: economy, population, energy, materials and techniques, government and manpower.

By 1980, the Institute concentrated on continuing programs designed to enlist more suppliers as funding members. There were new opportunities for the masonry industry; in passive solar construction, in freeway sound barriers and in a renewed architectural appreciation of natural materials were on the horizon.

The Institute's Board created a new membership classification for supporting members including: stone, insulation, wire and anchors, scaffolding, heavy equipment, cleaning products, caulk and sealants, mason sand and lime, precast concrete and miscellaneous building supplies.

A new Masonry Industry Coalition was formed to spearhead an industry wide effort to increase masonry's share of the construction market.

A changing of the guard took place in 1984 when Floyd Nixon, replaced John Heslip as the Institute's President. Nixon, a civil engineer with extensive masonry experience with a

contracting firm as well as with a brick manufacturer and a block manufacturer, committed to continue the many services to the masonry industry in a credible and professional manner. The Nixon era lasted only a year, due to his untimely death.

In 1985, the new President was Joe Neussendorfer. The Neussendorfer era received a boost from Board Chairman Michael Navetta who stated, "We have to get the message out to local government officials, building code people, fire inspectors, owners and developers that masonry is the only way to go. We have a time-proven, fire-safe system of construction and under the new Institute's president, we are going to let everyone know about the good qualities of masonry."

The Institute launched an all out effort to show owners, developers and consumers the fire-safety, insurance, sound and cost savings gained by utilizing masonry materials in new multi-family developments.

The Michael Navetta influence continued when, in 1988, he became the new executive director. His goal was to boost the masonry industry long-term by educating architects and members of the brick industry. His efforts were to gain their respect for sound masonry practices, extolling the benefits over brick/metal stud applications. Navetta initiated a series of articles entitled, *Technical Series*.

Continued service to the design community helped professionals understand masonry: its uses, installation and performance. The

### 1982

- Elect Frank Soave first chairman
- Appoint John Heslip president
- Kick-off ambitious marketing program
- American Society for Testing and Materials names John Heslip *Fellow*

### 1984

- Publish critical review on brick veneer/metal studs, *Brick Veneer-A Second Opinion*
- National Concrete Masonry Association appoints John Heslip executive vice president
- Appoint Floyd Nixon president

### 1988

- Publish TS-1 on *Flashings*, TS-2 on *Brick Selection* and TS-3 on *Block*
- Name annual scholarship in honor of Louis A. Scheich Sr.
- Over 250 attend M-Day on brick veneer/metal studs

### 1983

- Second chairman, Dwight Lewis
- Publish articles on *Economic Benefits of Flint Sound Wall* and update on the *Critical Review of Brick Veneer/Metal Studs*

### 1985

- Third chairman, Michael Navetta
- Develop MIM Technical Series articles
- Name Annual scholarship in honor of John Heslip
- Upper Peninsula contributes to MIM, through efforts of George L. Spencer
- Appoint Joe Neussendorfer president

### 1986

- Name annual scholarship in honor of George L. Spencer
- Staff structural engineer, Daniel S. Zechmeister, PE

### 1989

- 100 A/E presentations
- Structural Masonry Design course opens to design professionals
- First Masonry Certification Seminar at Lawrence Technological University
- Publish TS-4 on *Masonry Wall Design*
- Staff engineer, Paul V. McGuan

## History of the MIM continued

Institute now provided plan and material property reviews, along with an on-site inspection service.

The Institute fully understood, along with proper designs, the need for providing quality masonry in the construction industry, which gave birth to the first Masonry Certification Seminar.

In 1990 Michael Navetta was appointed President and Daniel Zechmeister the Executive Director. Navetta encouraged mason contractors to call the Institute when they encountered design problems. The Institute looked at design from a professional perspective and worked with architects. Emphasis was on good material properties, good design and detailing as well as good workmanship.

Navetta stated the future of this industry is performance, especially with the presence of the new code. Contractors now have to pay close attention to the code especially with new inspectors who may or may not be qualified. Educational programs to help assure masonry performance have been the major focus.

Focus during the Zechmeister era is on education as a major service of the Institute. Educational efforts are fashioned to serve the entire construction industry. In April 1994, the Institute completed a quarter of a century as the technical service and promotional arm of

the state's masonry industry. Three new programs have been implemented: a system for certifying mason contractors, the development of generic wall systems to serve architects, engineers and contractors and promotional efforts to build awareness in peer construction groups of masonry's advantages and competitiveness.

A revised and downsized set of By-Laws were implemented in 1996. Revisions affected the Institute's dues structures, the number of board members and standing committees, contractor qualifications for membership and classifications of membership. The Institute sponsored a grouting seminar, which served as a launching pad for the forthcoming grouting workshops.

The Michigan Masonry Advisory Board, formed in 1997, provides an open forum for design professionals and mason contractors. The Continuing Education Program for masonry was established.

It was agreed in 1999, the Institute would seek more members, especially from the brick sector, which was under represented. The Institute now sponsors workshops for special inspectors for structural masonry to encourage professionalism among inspection and plan check personnel.

Through a cooperative effort in 2000, the Institute appointed a director of marketing

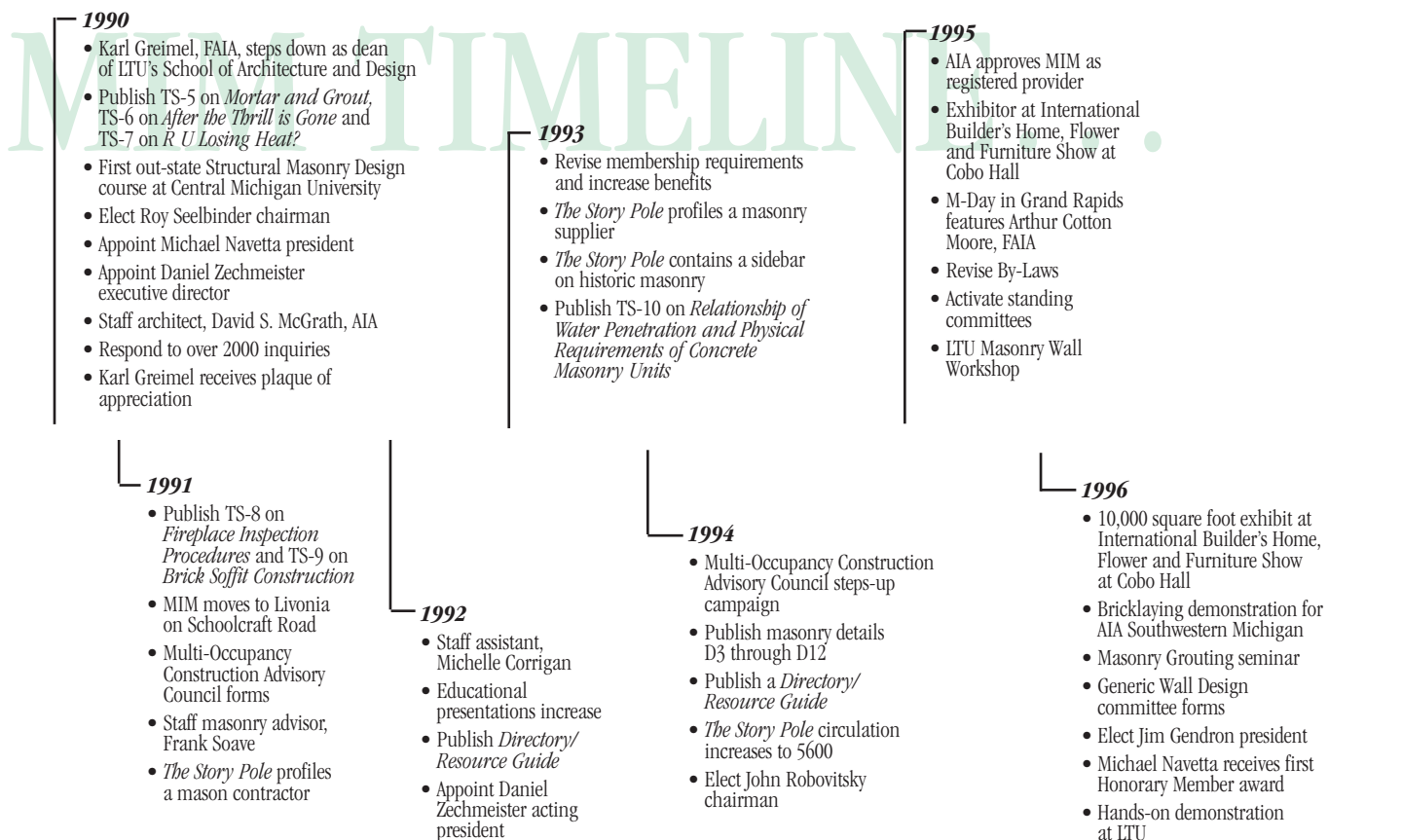
responsible for office and field involvement relative to marketing, consulting and promotion.

The Institute, in 2001, was dedicated to the promotion and advancement of the masonry industry through education to its members and well beyond to include the entire design and construction communities throughout the state.

The Institute promoted the virtues of loadbearing wall systems that not only provide the best value in the market today, but significantly reduce the construction timeline as well.

A new corporation was formed, the MIM Scholarship Foundation, for the purpose of raising funds for student scholarships.

*The Story Pole* took a major step forward by its transformation into an enhanced full color magazine, now funded by advertising. *The Story Pole* projects Michigan's masonry industry as the benchmark, distinguishing its mason contractors, suppliers and programs as among the finest in the country to its readers: architects, engineers, general contractors, construction managers, developers, building officials, building inspectors, school districts and municipalities.



## History of the MIM continued

The magazine serves as the Institute's major vehicle of communication along with the Institute's presence on the World Wide Web.

Over the years, the MIM staff has increased to include the expertise of a structural engineer, an architect, a marketing professional and office manager. Membership has grown from the initial eight contractors and 20 suppliers to 59 mason contractors, 49 suppliers, seven associate members and 74 informational members throughout the state.

Programs such as the Student Masonry Design Competition, the MIM/AIA-Michigan Honor Awards Program for Excellence in Masonry Design, M-Day, technical seminars, sponsorships of architectural and engineering professors to the University Masonry Workshop, Structural Design Course for both architectural students and professionals, scholarships for architectural students at all four colleges of architecture in Michigan, A/E presentations, seminars, workshops, certification, technical support, technical literature, masonry details and affiliations with many national industry

associations keep the Masonry Institute of Michigan setting the example for other associations to emulate.

Services are designed for members' use, but are available to others at additional cost. The Masonry Institute was created for the benefit of all. The vision of the MIM founding fathers, trustees, those serving through the years and those committed today is to reach out to *everyone* in the industry to make the industry stronger and better as a whole. ☺

### 1997

- MIM moves to Farmington Road in Livonia
- Participation on the Council for Masonry Wall Bracing
- Join the Masonry Alliance for Codes and Standards
- Michigan Masonry Advisory Board (MMAB) forms
- Continuing Education Program for Masonry
- Reinforcing Walls and Grouting Hollow Unit Masonry workshops
- Bricklaying demonstrations for AIA chapters
- Participation in Career Connections Fair for Lansing Tri-County students
- Participation in career days
- M-Day focus on inspections
- Annual meeting presents limestone

### 1999

- John Heslip receives Honorary Member award
- Development of *Craft Tech* notes
- Participation in Investigation on Spatial Factors in Bricklayer Productivity and Ergonomics at the University of Michigan
- First Special Inspector Workshop for Structural Masonry
- *Masonry Wall Cost Guide*
- Sponsor professors to the University Professors' Masonry Workshop
- ITU students build the Great Wall of Lawrence
- Michigan Masonry Advisory Board publishes non-generic details
- Elect Daniel Zechmeister recording secretary of ASTM C15 Main Committee on Manufactured Masonry Units
- David Biggs presents Post-Tensioned Masonry at the annual meeting
- Developing *Generic Wall Design-Volume 2*
- Dr. Russell Brown presents NCMA Design Software at M-Day
- Publish *ASTM Updates*

### 2001

- Recognize the late Karl H. Greimel with Honorary Member award
- The new *Story Pole* magazine debuts
- Development of new *Wall Bracing Supplement*
- New corporation forms: MIM Scholarship Foundation
- Develop new A/E presentations on *Brick Selection, Bracing Masonry Walls Under Construction, NCMA Software Design and Value Added Masonry*
- *Masonry Wall Cost Guide*
- Developing a new publication, *Masonry Perspective*
- *The Story Pole* features Harold H. Fisher, architect, centenarian
- Publish *Quality Residential Masonry: Part 1- Workmanship, Design and Materials*
- M-Day features Loadbearing Masonry
- Participation in NCMA high lift grouting research
- MMAB publishes *Masonry Backup versus Steel Stud Backup* details
- Elect Steve Dudek president

### 1998

- Grouting research
- James R. Snyder and Bob Ebeling receive Honorary Member award
- Restore Shrine at Our Lady of Providence in Northville
- Publish *The Effects of Various Grout Consolidation Methods*
- Staff architect, Kelly Krawulski
- Publish *ASTM 11 on Mortar Bedding* and *ASTM 12 on How to Specify Concrete Masonry Units*
- MAB publishes *New Roof to Wall* detail
- Publish *Generic Wall Design-Volume 1*
- Conduct Masonry Lecture Series on structural design
- Participate with Livonia Career Technical Center

### 2000

- Staff marketing director, Edward Stahlin
- Clarence Gleeson receives Honorary Member award
- Publish *FYI on Masonry: The Material of Choice!*
- Develop new A/E presentation on *Masonry Flashing*
- Sponsor professors to the University Professors' Masonry Workshop
- Establish Michigan Masonry Council
- Publish *MIM Fax Facts*
- [www.mim-online.org](http://www.mim-online.org) debuts