

Pivotal Moments in the History of WF&FSA

1926

- 30 floral wholesale industry representatives met in Chicago to address the need for wholesale and commission florists to form a national group to provide a national platform for the industry. WF&FSA's predecessor,
- The Wholesale Commission Florists of America (WFCA) is born on September 22, 1926 in Rochester, NY. WFCA's functions are held in conjunction with other industry organizations.

1961

- In response to changes in the industry, WFCA expands its membership and changes its name to the Wholesale Florists and Florist Suppliers of America (WF&FSA).

1973

- WF&FSA moves out of the offices of the Society of American Florists and initiates the first WF&FSA trade fair. The trade show grows to over 400,000 net square feet and is the 40th largest trade show in the country. The trade show "Wares of the World" is highly profitable and subsidizes other WF&FSA activities. Focused heavily on Christmas decorations, the show has no cut flowers.

1976

- Michael Dupey converted one of a group of Ben Franklin stores owned by his father into an arts and craft store that operated under the name of "Michaels" in Dallas, Texas. This was the beginning of large arts and craft stores and latter big box stores that took most of the Christmas decorations, silk flower and plant business away from retail florists and subsequently wholesaler florists.

Late 1970s

- Cut flower production in Colombia explodes and for the first time there is over supply of flowers year round and during holidays, leading to the eventual decline of U.S. grower membership.
- Supermarkets take notice of production in Colombia and start to seriously sell cut flowers and change consumer buying habits. Supermarket sales of cut flowers expand rapidly. Industry consolidation into large national chains in the late 1990's and early 2000's tends to eliminate purchases from local wholesalers.

1989

- Introduction of the World Wide Web. Sources of supply in the floral industry are about to become transparent and easily accessible.

1997

- A group of exhibitors make good on their threat to leave the WF&FSA trade show because WF&FSA won't open the show to large retailers like Michaels. They move to Dallas to start their own show on the same show dates. WF&FSA's trade show income drops by more than \$430,000 and WF&FSA has its first deficit year.
- At the WF&FSA Convention in Santa Barbara, members split on whether or not to allow mass marketers into the WF&FSA trade show as buyers. WF&FSA experiences a loss of membership for the first time in its history.
- The first of three wholesale buying groups form, in part, as a response to the creation of a publically traded roll-up called USA Floral Products. Buying groups are supportive of WF&FSA but in many ways compete with WF&FSA for wholesalers' time.
- Flowerbuyer.com held its first auction. This is the first major use of the Internet by florists to buy flowers direct and bypass the wholesaler.

1998

- WF&FSA enters into a partnership with the Floral Marketing Association to create FloraWorld. The Floral Marketing Association is an arm of the Produce Marketing Association and represents supermarket floral.
- ProFlowers puts flowers in a box and ships them directly to consumers, bypassing florists and wholesalers, creating a new consumer marketing segment.

1999

- The second and last FloraWorld is held. Supermarket buyers did not participate, angering wholesalers because supermarkets were allowed to attend the show as buyers. Subsequent loss of WF&FSA's trade show income results in budget shortfalls.
- WF&FSA again changes its name to reflect the international composition of its membership. The Wholesale Florist & Florist Supplier Association begins actively serving members from outside North America.

2001 – 2007

- WF&FSA holds smaller on-again off-again trade shows focused mainly on cut flowers. Success is moderate to poor. WF&FSA holds its last trade show in Tampa in 2008. The number of retail florists shrinks to 1977 levels; a drop of 14% in five years.

2008

- Wholesale florist sales flat since 2006. On average, wholesale sales decline 5.5% in 2008.

2009

- The worst recession since the Great Depression decimates retail florists and wholesale florists who were already weakened by shifts in consumer buying habits. Parts of the industry are restructured forever.

2010

- WF&FSA restructures its annual industry event under the name of WF&FSA Floral Distribution Conference and commits to hosting the fall event in Miami, with very low attendee registration fees. The event held that November attracts over 500 members and over 100 exhibitors, with very favorable attendee response. The association commits to the fall event in Miami for the next five years.
- Upon the retirement of Executive Director, Jim Wanko, at year's end, the WF&FSA board retains the services of Thompson Management Associates, LLC in Annapolis, Maryland, to provide headquarters and full staffing support for WF&FSA.

2011

- The combination of a restructured budget, expanded staff team, motivated board, active committees and a second very successful fall Conference puts WF&FSA 'back in the black.'

Current

- Become part of your company's, your industry's and WF&FSA's future success – get involved as an active WF&FSA member. Attend the spring WF&FSA Management Institute and fall Floral Distribution Conference; join a committee; use the association's education, marketing and technology resources. Full details at WF&FSA.org.