

# PCA Centennial

A century of influencing infrastructure  
in the United States

by Alpa Swinger, Portland Cement Association

Construction at the Portland Cement Association's campus in Skokie, Ill. in the 1950s. All Photos: Portland Cement Association Archives.

The 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Portland Cement Association (PCA) provides a unique opportunity that many of us can only experience once in our lifetime. The anniversary marks an occasion to not only celebrate the association, but where the industry has come and where it is heading into the next century. This is not just a testament to the resiliency of concrete, but also its role as a building block of society. Without concrete our homes, roads, schools, and cities would not exist as they are today.

Through all of the changes in technology and society over the last 100 years, PCA's original charter still stands—like many of the concrete roads, buildings, and other structures that were built over the past century and are still in active use.

One of our original ad slogans was "Concrete for Permanence." We have modified that in this new century to discuss the importance of resiliency. Similarly to our charter, the message that we use still is just as critical as it was a century ago.

Concrete has evolved into a complex, high-tech material. However, its

fundamental benefits—particularly strength, durability, and resilience—are valued today more than ever.

In 1872, David O. Saylor built the first portland cement plant in the United States, near Allentown in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley. Others soon followed, and by the turn of the twentieth century, cement was emerging as a construction staple.

This increasing popularity brought about a serious problem. At that time cement was sold in cloth sacks. Buyers paid a deposit on each sack, which was refunded upon return of the sack to the plant for re-use. But return of sacks for refilling was slow and erratic, and they were often in poor condition. Sacks were often stolen from construction sites and cashed in for deposits. Railroads complained of poor packaging and labeling.

B.F. Stradley of Vulcanite Portland Cement Company wrote to cement company executives calling for a meeting to discuss "the present methods of handling sacks, which are almost universally unsatisfactory" and proposed that an industry group be formed to facilitate the collection, repair, and

recycling of cement sacks. Accordingly, in 1902 cement makers formed the Association of American Portland Cement Manufacturers (AAPCM).

As the industry continued to expand, there were needs for reliable technical information, research, and uniform test methods and standards. In 1916, the AAPCM was reorganized as the Portland Cement Association to address these needs.

PCA began operations with 53 cement company members, a headquarters office in Chicago, eight district offices, and a total of 121 employees. Promotion and government affairs were priorities right from the start. The year of PCA's founding was also the year that the U.S. Congress passed the first federal-aid highway act, setting into motion a network of national highways.

PCA marketed concrete roads aggressively with an advertising campaign in 10 national weeklies, 23 trade magazines, and 59 farm journals. These early ads stressed the value of paved roads for the distribution of food and other products, including the idea that

Don McNeil—The Saturday Evening Post, 1957

**"Drive the new-type, sound-conditioned concrete like I did—and see how much fun it is!"**

Says DON MCNEIL, only and if possibly, all of the "Roadster Club" on America's Roadster Week!

**NEW-TYPE Concrete**

PORTLAND CEMENT ASSOCIATION  
A national organization to improve and extend the use of concrete

**"Even my 1914 Mercer rides like a baby carriage on this new-type, sound-conditioned concrete!"**

Says JAMES HINTON, famous singer and noted collector of historic cars

**NEW-TYPE Concrete**

PORTLAND CEMENT ASSOCIATION  
A national organization to improve and extend the use of concrete

**"Case of the smooth, quiet ride—that's what I'd title my travels on new-type concrete!"**

Says LEE STREET GARBARS, distinguished writer, creator of Super-Detective Peter Martin, seen on the US Network every Saturday evening

**NEW-TYPE Concrete**

PORTLAND CEMENT ASSOCIATION  
A national organization to improve and extend the use of concrete

**"Smoothest-riding surface ever put under four wheels—that's new-type concrete!"**

Says FRED (SONNY) KIEBITS, sportswriter and former top starliner for the NY Yankees

**NEW-TYPE Concrete**

PORTLAND CEMENT ASSOCIATION  
A national organization to improve and extend the use of concrete

**"Day or night... driving always seems so extra safe to me on new-type concrete!"**

Says NED BOGGS JR., movie actor, former U.S. Congressman and newspaper publisher

**NEW-TYPE Concrete**

PORTLAND CEMENT ASSOCIATION  
A national organization to improve and extend the use of concrete

**MAJOR DEERAN EXPRESSWAY OF NEW-TYPE CONCRETE SAVES NEW YORKERS 25,000 HOURS EACH DAY!**  
*(No pavement could be stronger even if saved from solid rock!)*

**NEW-TYPE Concrete**

PORTLAND CEMENT ASSOCIATION  
A national organization to improve and extend the use of concrete

**"I get a kick out of driving the new-type, sound-conditioned concrete. It's mighty relaxing!"**

Says GEORGE SHADY TIBBITTS, former manager of the Cincinnati Redlegs

**NEW-TYPE Concrete**

PORTLAND CEMENT ASSOCIATION  
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Various advertisements that were placed in national weeklies, trade magazines, and farm journals as part of the Portland Cement Association's marketing campaign in the 1950s.

concrete roads provided better fuel economy.

In 1956, the Federal Aid Highway Act ushered in the age of the interstate. PCA launched an ad campaign that took the benefits of "New-Type Concrete" directly to consumers with a parade of celebrity pitchmen. Bob Hope, Robert Young, Art Linkletter, Sam Snead. . . the list read like a late-1950s who's-who of actors, sports figures, and television personalities

who trumpeted "new type" concrete for the "Sweetest Ride Yet."

Beyond its importance for transportation and economic development, the interstate highway system became an integral part of American life and culture because of the mobility it fostered.

Housing emerged as priority as well. Appearing in *Time* magazine and other leading publications of the day, PCA

consumer ads in the 1930s and beyond targeted single-family housing. Messages were built around benefits such as fire safety, security, and durability.

In the 1960s, PCA teamed up with several allied industry groups to jointly sponsor the Concrete Industries Horizon Homes program in cooperation with the National Association of Home Builders. Each year one national award and seven regional awards were given to builders whose entries showed the best merchandising and design efforts. The top national award prize was a trip for two to any destination in the world.

Throughout the decades, PCA's market development has been based on solid research and technology. Promotion messages were backed by PCA's reputation for knowledge and expertise.

In its early years PCA did everything for the concrete industry. Today's industry has evolved to a more diverse state, and

Front view of the Portland Cement Association's main building.



PCA has needed to provide the “glue” to bind industry segments together.

The need for cooperation and collaboration within the industry is more important today than ever. Since cement is the common denominator among all concrete applications, a natural role for PCA is to foster a unified industry effort in shared areas of interest—the same need that first drew the industry together in 1916.

The PCA Centennial reminds us that over the last 100 years the cement industry has made possible a building material that has been essential to the development of this nation. Indeed, concrete is vital to civilization itself. **A**

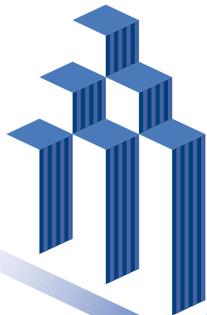
*Alpa Swinger is the director of infrastructure marketing for the Portland Cement Association in Skokie, Ill.*



Overhead view of the Portland Cement Association's campus in Skokie, Ill.



Advertisements touting the permanence of concrete.



**2016**

PCA Education Foundation  
**Professors' Workshop**  
 Teaching: Materials | Pavements | Structures

**July 25–29** Portland Cement Association, Skokie, Illinois

**Hurry,  
Space is  
Limited**

**For more information  
and to register, visit  
[www.cement.org/  
professorsworkshop](http://www.cement.org/professorsworkshop)**

The Professors' Workshop is designed to provide faculty in engineering, architecture, and construction management programs the tools to teach the latest developments in concrete design, construction, and materials. The week-long session included networking opportunities to exchange ideas with professors from many universities, demonstrations by software vendors, and free resource materials.

**Sessions covering:**

- Concrete Materials Properties
- Design, Construction, and Performance of Concrete Pavements
- Engineering and Economics of Concrete Structures (Buildings and Bridges)
- Industry Topics of Interest to All