

## HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE LOUISIANA ENGINEERING SOCIETY

In the fall of 1897, a group of New Orleans engineers proposed formation of an organization to keep abreast of developments in their profession. One primary objective was to pool their resources and make available to each member expensive journals and publications that would have been difficult for an individual to obtain.

The Society's first organizational meeting was held on December 22, 1897 with 14 members present. Constitution and Bylaws were adopted on January 8. When the group tried to incorporate, they discovered that the state law required at least 25 signatures. Thus, the first membership campaign began and by the time the charter was recorded on February 3, the number had increased to 29.

The first president of the Louisiana Engineering Society was Sidney F. Lewis, a native of New Orleans. Every president and secretary since that time is listed on the back page of the Louisiana Engineering Society's Constitution and Bylaws.

The Society's first milestone was the enactment of a registration law. The initial work toward securing passage of this legislation was begun as early as 1898. The founding fathers were much concerned about engineering competency and wished to protect the public from the activities of "dabblers and quacks who had only to hang out a shingle in order to qualify for business." During the 1900 and succeeding sessions of the Legislature, bills were introduced at the Society's request, but it was not until 1908 that the law was passed. As proposed, it was intended to include all branches of the engineering profession, but unfortunately opposition developed, and the act, which went into effect in July, was the very first state law of its kind that regulated only the practice of Civil Engineering and Land Surveying.

Act 308 of 1908 created the Louisiana State Board of Engineering Examiners and provided that the board members be appointed by the Governor from a list of names submitted by the Louisiana Engineering Society, which procedure is followed today.

In 1914, it was decided that the Louisiana Engineering Society should undertake the publication of its' own journal. The first issue of the *Proceedings of the Louisiana Engineering Society* was published in 1915. The title of the publication was changed to the *Louisiana Engineer* in 1959. Copies of all issues are available in the State Office.

As early as 1925, efforts were made to establish a Baton Rouge Chapter, but it was not until November 20, 1939, that this was accomplished. The Lake Charles Chapter came next on November 3, 1947. 1949 saw the establishment of both the Shreveport and Monroe Chapters on July 3 and October 3 respectively. The Lafayette Chapter was formed and its charter was presented on October 10, 1950. On February 15, 1951, the Alexandria Chapter received its charter.

New Orleans became a Chapter on October 12, 1964 as a sound administrative move to separate New Orleans from the State organization. The New Orleans Chapter was divided by the additions of the Bayou Chapter on April 29, 1969 and the North Lake Chapter on December 17, 1982. Unfortunately on October 16, 1992, the North Lake Chapter was dissolved.

1957 was a year of decision. The issue before the Society was whether or not to affiliate with the national organization and, if such affiliation appeared desirable, whether that organization would be the National Society of Professional Engineers or the Engineers Joint Council or both. The membership voted to join both in 1957. The Louisiana Engineering Society is still a member of the National Society of Professional Engineers.

The official domicile of the State Society moved to Baton Rouge on December 2, 1967. The first full time Executive Director was Earl Martin from July 1965 to August 1967, followed by Norman Ferachi from September 1967 to June 1969, Gerald Simmons from July 1969 to June 1973, R. C. "Doc" Spears from August 1973 to September 1982, Leta G. Bueto from October 1982 to December 1994, and Brenda W. Gajan from December 1994 to present.

Every engineer has two distinct interests:

First, and foremost, the engineer is a member of the engineering profession and as such has a common interest with every other member of the profession,

Second, the engineer has been trained, usually, in one particular technical branch of the profession, thereby establishing a community of interest and a need for organization in that particular branch.

Thus, we feel that every engineer should belong to and support both professional and technical organizations.

The Louisiana Engineering Society has a rich heritage. The founders built well. From a small beginning the Society has gone steadily forward. Today, we are at the threshold of greater things to come. If all our efforts are to count, wholehearted cooperation of every member is needed. When a new administration makes a request, follow the Society's tradition, pitch in and do it. Give the Louisiana Engineering Society the support it deserves. You owe it to your profession!