



Founding of the Los Angeles Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers

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HISTORY AND HERITAGE CHAIR





The Los Angeles Section of ASCE, initially the Southern California Association of Members of ASCE, was organized between March 1913 and January 1914.



Homer Hamlin

At the time, most civil engineers in the area were members of the Engineers and Architects Association of Southern California, since there was no local organization representing ASCE. Los Angeles City Engineer Homer Hamlin and Deputy City Engineer Andrew C. Hansen had been approached by several civil engineers suggesting that there appeared to be widespread interest in the local civil-engineering community in forming a local arm of ASCE and that the city should investigate the possibility.

Under their direction, on March 22, 1913, Wilbur C. Sawyer, an engineering draftsman in the office of the city engineer—also a graduate civil engineer and a former civil-engineering lecturer at the University of Vermont—wrote to Charles Warren Hunt, executive director of ASCE, inquiring about the possibility of a local branch of ASCE being established in Los Angeles. Hunt responded on April 22, 1913, conveying the national board's approval of the concept, but since several other regions in the United States had been approved as Associations of Members of ASCE, and the designation of Sections had not yet been established, it was suggested that Los Angeles form an association.

Sawyer was then directed to send a letter to all ASCE members and associate members in the Los Angeles area and to some in San Diego, polling them on their interest in establishing an Association of Members of ASCE. The response was decidedly in favor of forming a new organization.

On October 14, 1913, a dinner meeting at the Sierra Madre Club in Los Angeles was attended by about forty-five engineers who agreed to form the Southern California Association of Members of the ASCE, appointing J. B. Lippencott as acting president and Wilbur Sawyer as acting secretary. Lippencott then appointed a constitution and bylaws committee chaired by Andrew Hansen, with members George S. Binkley, Fulton Lane, J. R. Conley of San Diego, and W. K. Barnard.

At a second dinner meeting, on November 7, 1913, a draft of the proposed constitution, modeled after that of the San Francisco Association of Members of ASCE, was reviewed by about forty-five members, and a final draft was adopted. Present at the meeting were Leonard Metcalf, an ASCE board member from Boston, and F. C. Nermann, a member of the San Francisco association. At the conclusion of the meeting,



Lippencott appointed a temporary board of directors chaired by Capt. C. J. Leeds, with board members W. D. Larabee, F. E. Trask, Homer Hamlin, and Burdett Moody. The board's primary purpose was to arrange for a formal election of officers.

The constitution was forwarded to Charles Warren Hunt by Andrew Hansen on November 12, 1913, and on December 8, 1913, Hunt informed Hansen by letter that the board had approved it on December 3, 1913.

Between December 8 and 30, ballots were sent to charter members for the election of the association's first officers. On the ballot for president were J. B. Lippencott and William Mulholland; for vice-president with a one-year term were A. C. Hansen and C. T. Leeds; for vice president with a two-year term were G. S. Binkley and F. E. Trask; for secretary were W. K. Barnard and W. C. Sawyer; and for treasurer were C. H. Lee and C. S. Pope.



AC Hansen

Votes were counted on January 3, 1914, by Leeds, W. D. Larabee, and Trask. Lippencott was elected president; Leeds was elected vice president with a one-year term; Binkley was elected for a two-year term as vice president; Barnard was elected secretary; and Lee was elected treasurer.

On January 5, 1914, the first annual meeting of the Association was held at the University Club at Sixth and Hill Streets in Los Angeles and was attended by about sixty charter members. The election returns were reported to the membership, and the new officers were introduced by William Mulholland. It was decided that all members signing the constitution on or before the second regular meeting, to be held on February 11 at the University Club, would be entered as charter members of the local association, and eighty-five did so. The association's first paper, on the Thomas System of Reinforcing and Three Hinged Arch Bridges, illustrated with lantern slides, was presented by W. M. Thomas.

The constitution is reproduced below as it was originally written.