The American Society of Agronomy: 
100 Years of History

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Prophetic Voices from Our Past

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Cover: An early use of contour farming coupled with a contemporary aerial view of contour buffer strips in northeast Iowa. USDA-NRCS.
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Foreword

Celebration of the achievements of the American Society of Agronomy over a 100-year period represents the contributions of many individuals. The American Society of Agronomy was formed as the vision of Mark Carleton; however, the contributions of many people since that time have made ASA what it is today and what it will be tomorrow. There have been many individuals who have helped shape ASA through their interests in education, extension, research, policy, and publications. It is important to review our history, which is what is contained in this overview of the Society, but to also view this effort as the foundation for how we move forward with dedication and determination to continue to fulfill the vision of sharing agronomy with the world.

We are indebted to the efforts of Lowell Moser and the Centennial Committee to bring this volume together and compile the efforts of many of our great and valuable ASA members.

It is my pleasure to present this history of the American Society of Agronomy to you, and to serve you as ASA’s 100th president.

Jerry L. Hatfield
President, American Society of Agronomy
I n planning for the publication celebrating the 100-year history of the American Society of Agronomy, we decided to prepare a publication highlighting different periods and aspects of ASA. In this publication we have assembled much of the historical information that is available for ASA. We have brought together the histories that have been written by those who lived the history, the earlier ones by those who preceded us, and the more current ones by those who are most familiar with it and lived it.

In the first chapter, an attempt has been made to present a brief overview that provides a broad historical picture of the 100 years without getting into much detail. The next section describes our first president, Mark A. Carleton, and his contributions. Through his vision and leadership ASA was formed. His background was first published in the *Proceedings of the American Society of Agronomy* in 1911, and his agronomic legacy is illustrated in an article by Paulsen published in 2001 in the *Journal of Natural Resources and Life Sciences*. The next section compiles historical accounts, beginning with a piece written by T. Lyttleton Lyon, charter member, first secretary, 11th president, and 1933 historian of ASA. It describes the founding of ASA and history of the first 25 years. Next is a comprehensive history of the first 50 years (1907–1957) developed by H.H. Laude, with sections written by authors active in the various areas, and published in *Agronomy Journal* in 1962. Also included is a report of the development of the headquarters and building in the 1960s, written by Dale Smith, a member of the ASA Building Committee. A detailed description of the development of ASA from 1958 until 1977, written by D.C. Smith, follows. To complete the century of ASA history, Dwayne Rohweder (member for 54 years), Robert Barnes (member for 53 years and former ASA–CSSA–SSSA Executive Vice President), David Kral (former Associate Executive Vice President), and Cal Qualset (ASF Board Chair) summarize ASA’s development for the last 30-year period (1978–2007).

The articles from Society journals were reproduced largely intact. A small number of inconsistencies in style of presentation were made uniform, but the articles are presented as close as possible in their original form. Some material may have been added, such as photos or notes, and in some instances the articles are “reprinted in part.” In these cases, the reader is directed to the original article for the complete content.

The rest of the chapters were written specifically for this 100-year historical summary and are organized by topic. The history of *Agronomy Journal* is provided by Calvin Pearson, the current editor. Murray Milford and Dudley Smith provide a history of resident education and student activities of ASA. Agronomic Extension and the role of ASA are summarized by Dwayne Rohweder. Bill Payne and John Ryan discuss the international aspect and development of ASA.

The Prophetic Voices from Our Past multimedia program, created by Vivien Gore Allen and Philip Brown, features the past ASA presidents and quotes from their presidential addresses or other sources, as well as transcripts of their complete presidential addresses. “A Century of Women in Agronomy,” written by Marla McIntosh and Steve Simmons, describes the entry of women into the agronomic profession and features the individual life stories of women from a number of decades in the century. In addition, the CD includes century-long lists that record Society history—award winners, annual meeting locations and dates, and other tabular data too long for inclusion in the book. Our goal in bringing these two historical publications together in one book and CD package is to provide members and others first-hand accounts of the history and to preserve important historical knowledge and documents to prevent their being lost or buried because of time or location. We believe this book and CD will be a valuable historical reference of the centennial history of the American Society of Agronomy.

Lowell E. Moser  
Chair, ASA Centennial Committee