In the historic week in January when former president Lyndon B. Johnson died and the peace agreement for Viet Nam was initialed, soil survey history was being made in Charleston, South Carolina, at the 1973 National Soil Survey Conference. The conference was held in the Sheraton Hotel overlooking Fort Sumter in the harbor where previous chapters of history were written.

Some 300 years ago, in 1670, the first permanent settlement was established, Charles Towne Landing near the present city of Charleston. At that time indigo, for dye, and rice were the main crops grown. Then some 200 years ago several statesmen journeyed from Charleston northward to sign the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Several of these men are buried in the cemeteries of the churches in Charleston that go back to around the early 1700's. Again, more than 100 years ago history was being made in Charleston. Fort Sumter, located strategically at the entrance of the port of Charleston, was vital to maintaining a supply route to the South. It was through this port that most of the manufactured products, necessary for the economy of the agricultural region, entered the South during the Civil War.

The 1973 conference followed a new format. In the previous biennial conferences, committees were organized around subject-matter areas such as soil moisture, soil series and phase criteria, organic soils, and other topics. Before the 1973 conference, discussion questions were sent to participants for study. At the conference the participants were divided into four discussion groups and each group discussed topics in the areas of Investigations,