History of the Soil Science Society of America

J. Fulton Lutz, Historian

PREAMBLE

The development of soil science and the formation of the Soil Science Society of America are both only fragmentarily documented. The fragments appear in numerous journals and other documents over a number of years (AJ 1953. 45:651-654; AJ 1962. 54:57-69). The executive committee has taken the following actions concerning the history of the society:

1) In 1952 the SSSA’s Executive Subcommittee created the position of meeting secretary and historian. The duties were outlined in the announcement (SSSAP 1952. 16:318) but the new position was not incorporated in the bylaws, and apparently was overlooked in the restructuring of the societies which was then under way (AJ 1952. 44:103, 631).

2) At a meeting of the executive committee on April 14, 1969, it was suggested that a historian would be an asset and that a page or two from time to time could keep the history current (SSSAP 1969. 34:158).

3) Subsequently, the executive committee (June 30-July 2, 1970) voted to have the president of SSSA ask me to serve as SSSA historian (SSSAP 1971. 35:175). On July 14, 1970, Dr. C. I. Rich, President of the Soil Science Society of America, invited me to serve. I accepted with the reservation that whatever I prepared be presented to certain other members of the society for criticisms, comments, and suggestions.

4) The ASA Executive Committee, at a meeting June 28-30, 1971, “discussed ways to obtain more informative reports from the Society Historian (ASA) and ways to aid the Historian in writing his report.” By common consent, the executive committee agreed that to preserve historical records of the society each outgoing president should prepare a brief record of activities during his year in the presidency, together with pertinent documents. The minutes stated that the Crop Science Society of America Executive Committee took similar action for its society (AJ 1972. 64:100), but the minutes of the SSSA Executive Committee meeting on June 28-30, 1971, made no mention of it (SSSAP 1972. 36:198-202). However, on August 9, 1971, Dr. R. J. McCracken, outgoing President of SSSA, wrote me that the SSSA had taken such action and enclosed a copy of his report.

In the summer of 1972, I submitted a preliminary draft to 15 prominent members of the society, each of whom has been, or still is, active in society affairs. Responses were received from 11 of the 15. Their comments have been very helpful in preparing the final draft. For their constructive criticisms and suggestions I express my sincere appreciation to: Drs. L. D. Baver, Richard Bradfield, J. E. Gieseking, P. F. Low, H. E. Myers, A. G. Norman, W. H. Pierre, C. I. Rich (now deceased), and F. G. Viets, Jr. I am especially grateful to Drs. L. D. Baver and W. H. Pierre for their detailed comments and constructive suggestions.

Following submission of the revised draft and its approval for publication, a review committee was appointed. It consisted of: Drs. A. R. Bertrand, chairman, Richard Bradfield, H. B. Cheney, A. A. Klingebiel, R. W. Pearson, W. H. Pierre, and F. G. Viets, Jr.

Dr. Matthias Stelly and members of his staff in the Headquarters Office supplied much information and made many valuable comments and suggestions. The fragments appear in numerous journals and other documents of the Soil Science Society of America, but only fragmentarily documented. Their names are recorded in the histories (JASA 1933. 25:1-9; AJ 1953. 45:651-654; AJ 1962. 54:57-69). It should be noted that the executive committee has taken the following actions concerning the history of the society:

1) In 1952 the SSSA’s Executive Subcommittee created the position of meeting secretary and historian. The duties were outlined in the announcement (SSSAP 1952. 16:318) but the new position was not incorporated in the bylaws, and apparently was overlooked in the restructuring of the societies which was then under way (AJ 1952. 44:103, 631).

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