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President, Boston Society of Civil Engineers Section, ASCE  
1983-1984

**New President's Message**

In September of 1848, a young surveyor and former congressman from Illinois by the name of Abraham Lincoln--still twelve years away from his own presidency--gave a speech at Boston's Tremont Temple urging the election of Zachary Taylor. In July of that same year the Boston Society of Civil Engineers was founded and just four years later, the the American Society of Civil Engineers was organized.

BSCES/ASCE stems from a marriage of the two. While we enjoy the rich heritage of both, this heritage has established high standards of professional service for all of us.

In 1948, opportunities for obtaining a formal engineering education were minimal. Professional challenges, however, included railroad development and operation, provision of public water supply and harnessing of water power for industrial use. Today, opportunities for formal education are numerous and we face challenges including the repair of a decaying infrastructure and solving the problems associated with hazardous waste, acid rain, energy provision, and water supply.

Since 1848, our members, and civil engineers in general, have responded successfully to these challenges. At a seminar that I attended several years ago Joseph Coates, then Director of the Office of Technology Assessment of the United States Congress, postulated that civil engineers, through their works, have saved more lives throughout history than members of the medical profession. Our Journal contains many descriptions of our organization's activities and the dedication to service exhibited by our members over the years. On May 10 of this year, we dedicated the Borden Base Line as an ASCE National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark. Simeon Borden, using equipment of his own design, established a phenomenally accurate survey-base line from Hatfield to South Deerfield, Massachusetts, between 1830 and 1941. Simeon Borden was an active member and served as President and Vice President of the Boston Society of Civil Engineers.

I believe that it is this spirit of participation and dedication that has allowed our organization to serve our members and thereby to contribute to the betterment of society in general. This spirit is illustrated further in a letter from former BSCE and ASCE President, John R. Freeman. His letter is dated March 18, 1925 donating a fund of \$25,000 to the Boston Society of Civil Engineers. Here are three paragraphs excerpted from letter:

"I owe a debt to the old Boston Society of Civil Engineers, for inspiration and encouragement it gave me in my younger days through friendships and acquaintances made at the society meetings.

It was forty-four years ago that I joined the Society. Month after month for about four years I felt well repaid by what its monthly meetings had to give for making a sixty-mile round trip with a return after midnight. Yet today, forty years later, I have a still deeper appreciation of what the Society association may mean to a young engineer.

It seems only fair that, when one has found lifelong happiness, and attained a competence from his profession, he should recognize the debt he owes to those who went before him and whose data he used, and should in some way try to help those young men in his profession who are following after."

This letter reflects the spirit which underlies the vitality of our organization. Even though we live in complicated and economically trying times, our profession has served all of us well. I ask that all of you ponder the importance and potential contributions of BSCES/ASCE to other civil engineers, to society in general, and to each of us and that you resolve to contribute personally. There are many ways including:

1. Volunteering to serve on our committees and technical groups
2. Communicating ideas to Section officers
3. Attending and supporting Section-sponsored functions
4. Contributing to our Newsletter and Journal
5. Urging and supporting whole-hearted participation by other civil engineers

This latter effort is probably as important as any and is an obligation that falls heavily, but not solely, on those in education and those who enjoy other influential positions in our profession or in private firms.

I look forward to the continued intellectual and real growth of BSCES in the year ahead and to your vigorous participation. I thank you for the opportunity to serve as BSCES President for the coming year.

**Richard J. Scranton**  
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