

History of the Board 1950 - 1980

In 1950, with the passage of Act 73 of 1950, Louisiana became the second to the last state of the United States to recognize that engineers who practice in branches other than civil engineering should be registered. The Act created the Louisiana State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. Three members from the five member predecessor board, the Louisiana Board of Engineering Examiners, became members of this new board. They were Donald Derickson, John Mundinger, and Leo Odom. Other "Charter" members of the new seven member board were B. T. Bogard, A.D. Jackson, E. E. Taylor, and Jesse Coates. Donald Derickson continued as Chairman of the Board and Frank MacDonald, a full -time Professor of Civil Engineering continued as Executive Secretary. MacDonald's office at Tulane University continued to be the Board's office. The Board owned most of the furniture and Tulane furnished office and meeting spaces without cost. Prior to Act 73 of 1950 the Board needed little space. The only employee was the Executive Secretary and his office address was also the address of the Board.

Act 73 of 1950 provided for the registration of Professional Engineers in eight branches: Agricultural, Chemical, Civil, Electrical, Mechanical, Metallurgical, Mining Petroleum. It provided for the immediate registration of certain employees of the State of Louisiana and its political subdivisions as (Public Employee) Civil Engineers and current practitioners in branches other than civil engineering. Land surveyors continued to be registered on the basis of experience, an oral examination, and an eight -hour written examination. All registered Civil Engineers were allowed to practice land surveying. The Board was authorized to register persons as Professional Engineers on one of the following bases: diploma, experience plus two eight –hour examinations, long established practice, or reciprocity.

Graduates of approved engineering curricula were registered by application on the basis of a diploma. No experience was required, nor was an examination.

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Persons registered on the basis of experience plus examination were required to have eight years of progressive experience in engineering work, to pass an oral examination at a regular meeting of the Board, and a 16 –hour written examination administered in two 8 -hour sessions. The examination problems were designed by members of the Board and by other registered Professional Engineers in Louisiana. The final grade was based on the performance of the oral and written examinations and the quality and extent of the applicant's experience. The long- established practice provision was intended to assist engineers who were exempt from the provisions of Act 73 of 1950 to become registered at a later date, i.e., engineers working for the Federal Government, industry, and public utility firms. To qualify for registration on this basis, the applicant was required to have at least twenty years of progressive experience at a professional level and at least eight years of pre-professional experience. In addition, the applicant must have been in responsible charge of important engineering work for at least twelve years. A written examination was not required. Engineers registered in other states could be registered on the basis of reciprocity provided they had satisfied requirements similar to those for the registration of engineers on the basis of a diploma or of experience plus examination, and provided the states of their registration would register engineers from Louisiana with similar qualifications.

Act 73 of 1950 stated that only persons registered as Professional Engineers or Land Surveyors could practice in those professions, and it- authorized legal action against persons and firms that violated this provision. This was the beginning of a long and successful enforcement program. The activities of the Board increased significantly with the enactment of Act 73 of 1950. In 1950 the Board appointed its first full -time clerical employee to assist Dr. MacDonald with the processing of the many new applications for registration. In 1965 the office on the Tulane Campus was entirely too small for the Executive Secretary and two clerical assistants. The Board moved its office to a building on Earhart Blvd., purchased some new furniture and added another employee. The total number of registrants had grown from 1,276 in 1950 to 7,617 in 1965. In 1950 Louisiana ranked 24th in number of registrants by comparison with similar boards in the

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United States; in 1965 it ranked 7th. During this period, there were few changes in the membership of the Board. Usually a member was reappointed after the expiration of his seven year term. John Mundinger was replaced in 1955 and, following the death of Dr. Derickson in 1962, Roy T. Sessums was appointed. Donald Derickson served Louisiana Registration Boards for 37 years, 23 of those years as Chairman. Five of the original seven members were still serving in 1965. Dr. MacDonald retired as Executive Secretary in 1966 and was replaced by Dr. Daniel H. Vliet, Professor of Electrical Engineering at Tulane. In 1969 the Board moved to Lee Circle on St. Charles Avenue.

Act 73 of 1950 made no provision for the registration of corporations. Nevertheless, the Board quickly recognized that the public needed protection from corporations and other firms that would provide engineering and land surveying services. Such firms were required to qualify by rules adopted by the Board. The Board retained an attorney and investigated violations of the registration law. During the period from 1955 to 1980 the investigations averaged between 200 and 300 per year. On August 20, 1978, the Board adopted Rules of Practice to regulate the practice of engineering and land surveying for the protection of the public.

The Louisiana Board has always been a leader in the affairs of the National Council of Engineering Examiners, NCEE. Louisiana Board members and the Executive Secretary regularly attend meetings of the Council and its Southern Zone and serve on committees. In appreciation of their efforts, members of the Louisiana Board have received more NCEE Distinguished Service Certificates than those of any other State Board. Marcel Garsaud was a founder and first president of NCEE, and then named NCSBEE. Leo M. Odom and Roy T. Sessums served as Vice Presidents of NCEE; Odom from 1956 to 1958 and Sessums from 1968 to 1970. Roy Sessums was President of NCEE from 1972 to 1973, the second Board member to receive that honor. Waldemar S. Nelson served as Treasurer of NCEE from 1976 to 1978. Fred Culpepper served as Vice President from 1981 to 1983.

Act 73 of 1950 was amended in 1967 to add industrial engineering to the list of branches in which the Board could register engineers. It was amended again

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in 1969 to increase the size of the Board from seven members to nine members. At least one of the nine members had to be actively engaged in the practice of land surveying. Two were from private practice, two from industry, two from education, and two from government. All nine had to be registered as Professional Engineers. Waldemar S. Nelson and Calvin Watts were appointed as the two new members. The Louisiana Land Surveyors Association was not satisfied that the amendment provided the land surveying profession with adequate representation on the Board. Members of that association and some Board members were also disturbed because Civil Engineers were authorized by law to practice land surveying yet many civil engineering curricula of recognized standing did not require an adequate number of surveying courses. Graduates of those curricula were required to pass oral and written examinations in land surveying to acquire registration as Land Surveyors in Louisiana.

To address the problem of representation of land surveyors, the Board appointed C. J. Tircuit as Land Surveyor Assistant from a list of nominations submitted by the Louisiana Land Surveyors Association.

Later when Mr. Tircuit's term of office expired, F. M. Tessier was appointed to the position from a similar list of nominations. Mr. Tessier served until 1975 when Act 73 of 1950 was amended to require the Governor to appoint a Land Surveyor to the Board from a list of nominations submitted by the Louisiana Land Surveyors Association. Mr. A. J. Brouillette, a registered Land Surveyor in private practice, was so appointed to the Board. This amendment also separated the profession of land surveying from civil engineering by removing the authority Civil Engineers had to practice land surveying. All persons registered as Civil Engineers at that time were issued certificates as Land Surveyors. The requirements for the registration of Land Surveyors were upgraded, and so were the requirements for the registration of Professional Engineers. The Board was given authority to require a person who applied for registration on the basis of Long Established Practice to pass a written examination. The Legislative bill that was effective in making these significant amendments was not effective in removing the industrial exemption.

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During the thirty year period when Act 73 of 1950 was the Registration Law, the Board used its rule making powers to progressively upgrade the requirements of its registrants. It began with the minimum standards authorized by law, then gradually raised them until they compared favorably with those of the other states and territories. This is the reason that few significant amendments to Act 73 of 1950 were really necessary, and the reason that many Louisiana registrants have been able to obtain registration in other states on the basis of reciprocity. For example, in 1950 a graduate of an approved engineering curriculum with no experience could obtain registration as a Professional Engineer by application without taking an examination. In 1965 such a graduate was required to pass the fundamentals examination and have 4 years experience, and by 1979 the basic requirements were: graduation from an approved curriculum, four years of experience, and two 8 -hour written examinations. There were many studies of Act 73 of 1950. Suggestions for improvement made by the Louisiana Engineering Society and other professional societies resulted in changes in the administration of the Registration Law, not through legislation but through adoption of new rules by the Board. These rules were challenged during several court cases but never overturned. Nevertheless, by the late seventies the engineering profession was faced with a decision. Should there be a major revision of Act 73 of 1950 or should there be an entirely new law? This question was debated at meetings of the Louisiana Engineering Society and several of the technical engineering societies with chapters or branches in Louisiana.

In 1980 under the leadership of the Legislative Committee of the Louisiana Engineering Society and its Chairman Lamon Moody, the engineering and land surveying professions decided that a complete revision of the registration law was in the best interest of the public. All interested persons and organizations were encouraged to participate in the revision. Persons registered as Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors were kept informed of the progress through articles in the LOUISIANA ENGINEER. Since 1959, to 1995 this magazine published by the Louisiana Engineering Society has been utilized by the Louisiana State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors as its official journal. These efforts resulted in a bill that passed the Legislature with little

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opposition and only minor modifications. On September 12, 1980, Act 568 became Louisiana's new registration law for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. It replaced Act 73 of 1950, a registration law that had successfully served for more than thirty years.

Most of the important Rules of the Board were incorporated in the act, and the Board was instructed to adopt others that may be subject to change, i.e., rules of professional conduct. The Board was given the authority to determine when rosters should be published and when registration certificates need to be renewed. The law required that corporations and other firms that provide, or offer to provide, engineering and land surveying services had to be registered. After December 31, 1984, the Long Established Practice provision was phased out and all applicants for registration as Professional Engineers would be required to be college graduates, to have at least four years of progressive experience, and to pass two 8 -hour examinations. Only the graduates of approved engineering curricula could be certified as Engineers -in- Training. There were no provisions for exceptions. Although this new registration law had no initial effect on the composition of the Board, it did mandate that no Board member who had served a full nine -year term of office could be reappointed. This provision affirmed a policy that the Louisiana Engineering Society had been following with regard to nomination of Board members