

Historical Notes on the GCAGS and 2000 Update

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Abstract

The idea for the Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies was conceived in an informal meeting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, May 12, 1950. The meeting was attended by seven Louisiana geologists, who would later be named our "Founding Fathers." The first Annual Meeting was held in New Orleans in November, 1951 at the Roosevelt Hotel (now the Fairmont), with seven member societies participating, and an estimated attendance of 600-800. In 1967 GCAGS became affiliated with AAPG, and since that date the annual meetings have been designated as Gulf Coast Section meetings of AAPG. By 1980, member societies had grown to twelve.

The GCAGS is governed by its Board of Directors. Voting members are the President (from the convention host society), the Vice President (from the next host society), the immediate Past President, and one delegate from each member society. Several advisory committees have been established to assist the Board in its functions. These committees are: Finance (established 1977), Long-range Planning (1977), Student Grant (1977), Publications (made permanent, 1978), Awards and Nominations (1981), Convention (1994), and Transactions CD-ROM (1998). In addition, the GCAGS has had a representative to the AAPG Advisory Council since 1971, two since 1999. In 1983 a Historian was appointed, and since 1989 there has been an Executive Secretary.

Significant new developments since the publication of the History of GCAGS in the 1991 Transactions include: (1) establishment of the Convention Committee (1994) to assist the host societies with their conventions, (2) election of two representatives to the AAPG Advisory Council (2000) to replace the one appointed by the GCAGS Board of Directors, and (3) progressing efforts to have the Transactions volumes placed on CD-ROM, and in 2000, Houston's decision to make the CD-ROM for volume 50 the primary vehicle of publication with a bound hard copy available on request.

Introduction

This report constitutes an overview of the founding of GCAGS, an outline form of the Association's general development, the sequence of participation in GCAGS by its member societies, a summarized overview of the standing committees and other advisory entities, and significant changes since the first history of GCAGS (Pope 1991) was published. A more detailed history similar to the 1991 edition is planned for the 2001 *Transactions*.

In the Beginning

On May 12, 1950 there was a joint afternoon meeting of the New Orleans Geological Society and the South Louisiana Geological Society in the auditorium of the Geology Building at Louisiana State University. It was attended by several members of both societies, one from Shreveport, and virtually the entire LSU School of Geology (faculty, staff, and students), headed by Dr. H. V. Howe.

That same evening, seven geologists, two from Lake Charles, (Philip R. Allin and W.B. Neill), one from Lafayette, (F.B. Stein), three from New Orleans, (Leslie Bowling, A. P. Claudet, and D.D. Utterback), and one from Shreveport (Thomas H. Philpott) convened at a local lounge for a few cool ones. They unanimously proclaimed the joint meeting of that afternoon a resounding success, and discussed holding future joint meetings each year, to include Shreveport. Then the subject moved to a possible Louisiana section of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists. Most felt that AAPG would not accept the Louisiana societies because of their very diverse membership at that time. In those early days of the burgeoning Gulf Coast petroleum industry, the local societies included many professionals in the oil patch who were not geologists, because they wished to participate and had no where else to do so.

The subject then shifted to the last of the four original Gulf Coast regional AAPG meetings, held in Biloxi, Mississippi, in 1949. Three previous regional meetings had been held in Biloxi (1946), San Antonio (1947), and Houston (1948). The 1949 meeting was hosted by the New Orleans Geological Society and held under AAPG rules of

procedure. It was not deemed to be satisfactory for several reasons. As a more suitable design, the idea of an "Association of the Southern Geological Societies" was conceived at this informal meeting in Baton Rouge on May 12, 1950. By the time of the first annual meeting in November, 1951, the name had evolved to the "Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies." The minutes of the May 12th meeting were recorded by A. P. Claudet and transcribed in a memorandum addressed to Leslie Bowling, dated May 16, 1950. The three-page memo was printed in the 1980 *Transactions* as a part of the Dedication of that volume to the Seven Founding Fathers of the GCAGS.

Bowling (1967) listed seven reasons for the need of the organization: (1) an annual meeting (with rotating host societies), (2) a rapid means of publication (full papers available at the annual meeting), (3) a less rigid editorial policy, so that all opinions could be heard, (4) less stringent membership requirements, (5) communication with all facets of the industry, (6) more flexible policies with respect to convention management, and (7) an organization free of politics (in order to help expedite this provision, it was agreed that each member society would have one vote, regardless of the size of the society).

These seven criteria have been our guidelines since the inception of GCAGS. They were designed to produce a regional meeting more in keeping with the needs of the Gulf Coast geologists, and not intended to interfere with or infringe upon, in any way, any facet of the AAPG. Some of the member societies were much more insistent than others for the GCAGS to become affiliated with the AAPG. Although there was a persistent effort almost from the beginning toward that end, it was not until 1967 that the goal was reached. Since that time the annual GCAGS-GCSSEPM meetings have been designated as Gulf Coast Section meetings of AAPG.

Most of this part of the report is based on notes sent to me by Phil Allin (2000), one of our seven Founding Fathers. His complete narrative is planned for publication in the proposed 2001 history of GCAGS.

Important Dates

General

Here are some of the more important dates in the GCAGS development, beginning with the conception of the idea for a Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies (originally, the "Association of Southern Geological Societies"). It should be noted that the GCAGS as a section of AAPG is unique in that we are an association of local societies rather than individual members of the section, as is the case in all other instances.

- May 12, 1950—The concept of an association of Gulf Coast geological societies evolved at a conference, in Baton Rouge attended by our seven Founding Fathers, representing New Orleans, South Louisiana, and Shreveport.
- December 1, 1950—The letter of proposal was sent to nine Gulf Coast societies for their consideration.
- March 14, 1951—Representatives of eight local societies met in Houston to formalize the concept, and agreed to submit the design to their respective societies for consideration and adoption.
- May 15, 1951—Representatives of seven of the societies again met in Houston, and adopted the resolutions previously considered. This date is thus the BIRTHDAY of the GULF COAST ASSOCIATION OF GEOLOGICAL SOCIETIES. The original member societies were: Corpus Christi, East Texas, Houston, Mississippi, New Orleans, Shreveport, and South Louisiana (now Lafayette). Leslie Bowling was the first Steering Committee Chairman.
- November 15-17, 1951—The first Annual Meeting of the GCAGS was held at the Roosevelt Hotel (now the Fairmont) in New Orleans with an estimated 600 to 800 delegates and spouses in attendance, with the seven societies listed above participating.
- January 7, 1952—The GCAGS petitioned AAPG for affiliation as a section of the AAPG, following strenuous urging of the Houston society.
- February 16, 1953—The GCAGS Steering Committee approved and forwarded its proposed constitution to the AAPG. Subsequently, the AAPG suggested revised format was rejected by the majority of GCAGS member societies.
- August 23, 1954—The constitution, as formerly submitted to AAPG, was formally adopted by GCAGS. In accordance, the Association then elected officers to form its Executive Committee. Formerly the governing body was the Steering Committee, headed by its Chairman. The first officially designated President was W. R. Canada of Houston.
- October, 1954—The Gulf Coast Section of SEPM (founded in 1953) participated in the Annual Meeting, as an equal partner. The GCSSEPM has continued to participate each year, making major contributions to the technical programs and field trips. The GCSSEPM also has their own highly successful Annual Bob F. Perkins Research Conference since 1980, usually held in early December in Houston.
- October, 1957—The GCAGS extended an invitation to AAPG to hold a meeting of its Executive Committee in New Orleans and designate the annual GCAGS meet-

ing as a regional meeting of AAPG. For unknown reasons this invitation was not accepted.

- March 2, 1967—At the GCAGS (midyear) Executive Committee meeting in San Antonio, the AAPG presented a resolution that had been adopted by the AAPG Executive Committee on February 10, 1967, formally inviting the Association to become a section of AAPG. The resolution specifically stated that: (1) both parties shall retain and maintain complete autonomy..., and (2) either association may withdraw from the relationship upon 30 days written notice.
- July 10, 1967—AAPG was officially advised of the acceptance of the above cited invitation.
- 1971—GCAGS Representative to the AAPG Advisory Council established.
- October 28, 1977—GCAGS established the following standing committees: (1) Finance, (2) Financial Aid to Students (now Student Grant Committee), and (3) Long Range Planning Committee.
- 1978—Publication Committee permanently established.
- 1980—*Earth Enterprises* established to handle sale of publications of GCAGS, GCSSEPM, and local societies.
- October 23, 1981—Awards and Nominations Committee established.
- October 28, 1983—Historian appointed.
- April 1986—The GCAGS was incorporated in Baton Rouge, as a requirement to secure liability insurance for the annual convention.
- April 1988—The GCAGS Constitution was changed to Bylaws, in keeping with our incorporation requirements. Our former Executive Committee thus became our Board of Directors.
- January 1, 1989—Mrs. Birdina Schroeder became our first Executive Secretary. Although offered a stipend, she graciously chooses to serve without compensation for her services.
- April, 1994—The Convention Committee was added to the previously operating standing committees (Awards and Nominations, Finance, Long-range Planning, Publications, Student Aid, Historian, and Representative to the AAPG Advisory Council).
- 1998—Liaison Committee to Data Pages to capture *Transactions* was established on CD-ROM.
- 1999—The AAPG House of Delegates approved a change in the bylaws that allows the GCAGS two representatives to the AAPG Advisory Council, rather than the previous single representative.

- March 31, 2000—Houston Convention Committee announces that the CD-ROM will be the primary vehicle for publishing the *Transactions* with a printed copy to be made available upon request.

Member Societies Chronology

The GCAGS began operation at its annual meeting in 1951 with seven societies:

- Corpus Christi
- East Texas
- Houston
- Mississippi
- New Orleans
- Shreveport
- South Louisiana (now Lafayette)

In 1952 Baton Rouge was added—total 8.

In 1953 South Texas and Tallahassee (now Southeastern) were added—total 10.

In 1956 Beaumont was added—total 11.

In 1959 Baton Rouge was lost—total 10.

In 1967 Alabama was added—total 11.

In 1971 Beaumont was lost—total 10.

In 1974 Austin was added—total 11.

In 1980 Baton Rouge was added—total 12.

Convention Chronology

For the first fifteen years, beginning in 1951, the annual conventions were rotated among five member societies: New Orleans, Corpus Christi, Shreveport, Houston, and Mississippi (at Biloxi). In 1966, Lafayette entered the rotation, and in 1967, the Southwestern Geological Society (San Antonio) followed. In 1968 the Mississippi society held their first of four conventions in Jackson. Austin entered the rotation in 1977, and Baton Rouge was added in 1986.

Since the final Mississippi convention in Jackson in 1992, the annual meetings have rotated among eight cities: Shreveport, Austin, Baton Rouge, San Antonio, New Orleans, Corpus Christi, Lafayette, and Houston.

The Alabama society has never hosted an annual convention, due to lack of suitable convention and hotel accommodations. The same is true of the East Texas Society (Tyler), although they offer assistance when Shreveport hosts the annual meeting. The Southeastern Society hosted one convention in Miami, Florida, in 1969.

Attendance at the annual conventions have ranged from the 600 to 800 in 1951 to over 2800 in Houston in 1982. Most of the meetings have been financial successes, and all of them have been highly successful in our technical endeavors.

Governance

General

The GCAGS was originally governed by its Steering Committee. Each participating society had one representative. The chairman was elected from these representatives, always coming from the city hosting the annual meeting. The other (non-voting) members were the Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. After the constitution was adopted in 1954, the officers then became, the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Voting members of the Executive Committee became the President, the Vice President, the immediate Past President, plus one representative from each member society. Thus, three societies have two votes, while the others have one vote. Before 1962, the Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer could be elected by the Executive Committee from any member society. In 1962, the Vice President became the President-elect, and was selected from the member society to next host the annual convention. The Secretary and Treasurer were also selected from the host society. Of course, the convention General Chairman was always from the host society. In 1986 the GCAGS was incorporated in order to secure liability insurance for the annual convention. In 1988 the Constitution became the Bylaws, and in keeping with the corporate structure, the Executive Committee became the Board of Directors. Voting members have remained one from each society, plus the President, Vice President, and the immediate Past President. The Board meets twice a year, at the annual convention and at a midyear meeting. The present Executive Committee, for interim administration matters, consists of the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The GCAGS Financial Officer, appointed by the Board, is included when his advice is needed.

Advisory Committees

Several advisory committees and other ancillary posts have been added over time. The chairmen of these committees meet with the Board of Directors twice annually to assist the Board in their functions. They can offer recommendations, resolutions or motions pertaining to their duties, but do not have a vote.

In 1971, the GCAGS began sending a representative to the AAPG Advisory Committee. The first such representative was Frank W. Harrison, while our current representatives are Gerald R. Rolf and Dwight "Clint" Moore.

In 1977, three new committees were added: Finance, Long-range Planning, and Financial Aid to Students (now

Student Grant). Bill C. Tucker was first chairman of the Finance Committee, and Howard W. Kiatta is the current chairman. The Long-range Planning Committee was first headed by E.G. Wermund, Jr., and is now chaired by Peter G. Gray. Student Grant's first chairman was Raymond W. Stephens, while Bonnie R. Weise is the present chair.

In 1978, Robert E. Boyer became the first permanent chairman of the Publication Committee. He continues in that capacity today. In 1980, he formed *Earth Enterprises, Inc* to handle the sale of GCAGS publications, plus those of the member societies and the GCSSEPM.

The Awards and Nominations Committee was established in 1981 with M. O. Turner as chairman. Fred H. Marshall now heads this committee. In 1983, David E. Pope was appointed as GCAGS Historian, and continues in that capacity at present.

In 1989, Mrs. Birdena Schroeder was selected as GCAGS Executive Secretary, and continues as such to present. She has continued to serve admirably in this capacity on a gratis basis.

In 1994, Dan L. Smith was appointed Chairman of the GCAGS Convention Committee. He is still serving as such today. Edward B. Picou, Jr. has been working in conjunction with a commercial firm for the past two years to place the GCAGS Transactions on a CD-ROM that will be available for a predetermined price.

Conclusions

The Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies began with seven local societies in 1951; since 1980, it has had twelve member societies. Despite the erratic fluctuations caused by the fortunes of the oil industry, upon which we are so heavily dependent, the GCAGS has continued in general to prosper. Our total membership is somewhat less now than in the boom days of the 1980's (about 9000); however, we are still vibrant, publishing more diversified papers in the *Transactions*, which has been for decades the "Bible" for Gulf Coast geology. We are very strong financially, and fully expect this condition to continue into the foreseeable future.

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