

Historical, entertaining account of the PLSO as remembered by A.O. Myers



A.O. Myers, a founder of the Professional Land Surveyors of Ohio, started Myers Surveying Co. in Columbus in 1946. The next six years he spent trying to get over the hump in business to buy a house and raise his family so he did not have time to follow the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers process of downgrading the surveying profession that some were trying to accomplish.

Myers and a close friend Wibb Mechwart, who also was working long hours to promote the growth of his company, had no idea of certain actions being taken and having been taken regarding the surveying profession. Both believed surveyors were being reduced to that of technicians. Myers received a call in 1953 from a friend who was a member of the executive committee of the OSPE to notify him about an upcoming meeting to define the practice of surveying followed by an introduction of an amendment to the Ohio Legislature greatly limiting surveyors' means of making a living.

Mechwart and Myers went to the meeting and after giving input the surveyor item was tabled because only a few engineers at the meeting wanted to limit the practice of surveyors. Carl Walker and Harley Watts Sr. also spoke on behalf of the surveyors, and Myers then joined the OSPE to follow its programs.

Myers was asked in 1955 by Robert Tippett, then president of the Franklin chapter of the OSPE, to attend monthly meetings to represent surveyors. Myers enthusiastically accepted, but when he attempted to vote, he was told he did not have the right to vote because he "was only a surveyor". Nearly 70 percent of those attending were in disbelief like Myers because the OSPE was founded by surveyors. Former records and photos of members labeled the society "Surveyors and Engineers Society".

The issue then was taken for a vote by all Franklin County Chapter members. Those who were "not for surveyors' right to vote" were vehement in their objections. One said, "Gentlemen: It is a very simple equation. Engineer is to surveyor as doctor is to nurse." However, an overwhelming majority were in favor of reinstating the right of surveyors to vote.

Mechwart and Myers from 1954 to 1958 visited the land surveyors associations in Indiana, New York and Virginia to learn all they could about their problems and goals. Myers and Mechwart learned the groups had organized to protect their profession and their means of survival, and they should do the same. The Professional Surveyors of Ohio was then formed in 1960 as a functional group of the OSPE. Harry Crouch, Ray Gasbarre, Alva Grover, Robert Linton and Robert Patridge were among those at the

rule-forming meeting held at the OSPE headquarters, and Grover, who was respected and in his early 70s contributing much of his time to the profession he loved, was elected as two-term chairman. Gasbarre took over for Grover following his death and served the remainder of his 1962 term and served as chairman again in 1965.

The then executive secretary of the OSPE and the PSO, Lloyd Chacey, was asked at a very early Saturday meeting if he was a registered surveyor, and if so, why his professional engineering license was properly framed and hanging on the wall of his office but not his professional surveyor license. His PS license was found after searching on the floor between his desk and the wall. The group meticulously dusted off the PS license and ceremoniously hung it on the wall at the same level as his PE license.

Preparation of state of Ohio highway right-of-way plans was one of the early issues taken up by the new PSO from 1962 to 1964 along with the legal descriptions used to "pick up" the lands needed. Centerline off-set descriptions and aerial photography were used with little or no field surveying. Title attorneys, recorders and land owners could not identify any land to be transferred.

All professional surveyors had a horrendous, time-consuming effort to intersect stationing of the centerline of a highway plan with a land subdivision line (section line, old recorded farm line). Also, what monuments were set were usually set by a team of laborers working for the construction contractor.

The Hamilton County Recorders refused to accept centerline off-set descriptions; the state of Ohio director of highways filed suit against the county recorder with the recorder winning.

The PSO held a joint convention with the OSPE in Dayton in 1964, and Myers was assigned to develop a program for surveyors. Myers contacted the National Aeronautical Space Association in Cleveland to provide a speaker on the "Surveyor on the Moon" project it was to launch. NASA staff asked how many to expect at the convention, and Myers said the PSO was affiliated with the OSPE, and the Franklin County OSPE Chapter had 700 members. NASA enthusiastically sent a speaker, full-scale mockup of the Rocket Booster and the mechanical surveyor that would actually land. Disappointingly, only 12 surveyors attended the convention.

"If it hadn't been for the fact that the good people of Dayton had lined up for three days to see the exhibit on one half block area outside the entrance, NASA would have sent me to Leavenworth!", Myers said.

Thankfully, all NASA wanted was favorable publicity hoping voters would approve its budget so it was a great success as far as it was concerned.

Many complaints were heard from surveyors about collection of fees for subdivision layouts, boundary and topographic surveys. A bill was before the state legislature in 1966 to amend Ohio Revised Code Section 1311.02 for "granting mechanic lien rights to surveyors". The Michigan Society of Registered Land Surveyors gained lien rights in 1958. Chacey under direction from the OSPE testified the engineering section of the OSPE could not back the bill because it would take away from the

“professional image” it had created, but it would be OK if surveyors wanted it. The Ohio House of Representatives tabled the bill.

A surveyor served as chairman of the OSPE Legislative Committee from 1966 to 1967, and Bob Patridge served on the legislative committee since. The PSO was successful having a bill passed in 1967. The bill required record descriptions to have the name of the person preparing said description on the record deed. The final bill did not resemble the original because members of the legislative committee would cut out all they could. The PSO had to give in several areas but was happy it finally passed.

The same surveyors were complaining that in their communities they had always prepared the street, storm, sanitary plan for a subdivision in a community, and the last few projects had been rejected because they were not signed by a registered engineer. (One Canton surveyor complained of this new practice because he said his father, a registered surveyor, had performed this service for years.)

The professional surveyor/professional engineer relationship was at a breaking point in 1971 so an OSPE ad-hoc committee was formed. Myers and Mechwart attempted to enlighten representatives from the OSPE and CEO about the surveying practice. Most of the professional engineers attending were ceramic, mechanical, chemical and structural, and knew nothing of the actual practice of the surveying professional. Nonetheless, the engineers were favorably impressed by the presentations.

The former PSO not long after formed the Professional Land Surveyors of Ohio and withdrew from the OSPE. Myers as well as others had no doubt that having a separate association for surveyors was best. The PLSO attempted to have representation on the Ohio State Board of Registration to no avail until 1976 when Mechwart won an appointment from Gov. Rhodes. Mechwart was voted chairman of the board two years later, and spent many days and months working on the National Council of Engineers examination, survey section, and helped formulate questions, graded exams and handled board complaints.

Along with Crouch, Grover, Linton, Mechwart, Myers and Patridge, others who worked toward the formation of the professional surveyors group in the early years were Edward Friedl, Charles Harris, Harry Rolfe and Donald Schultz.