A HISTORY OF THE PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS IN ONTARIO

(Note: This history is a work in progress).

Landscape architecture was formally organized as a profession in Canada in 1934. The precedents for establishing a society were the British Institute of Landscape Architects, formed five years earlier in 1929, and the American Society of Landscape Architects, which had been established since 1899.

The official founding of the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects & Town Planners occurred in March 1934 at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto. The nine founding members were Howard Dunington-Grubb, Lorrie Alfreda Dunington-Grubb, J. Vilhelm Stensson, Carl Borgstrom, Gordon Culham, Helen Kippax, Edwin Kay, Frances Steinhoff, and Humphrey Carver. Humphrey Carver recalls that this was “a small group of landscape architects who came to know one another and enjoy one another’s company very much. The Grubbs were the centre of this circle... We used to meet in the garden of the Diet Kitchen Restaurant, on Bloor Street, and together we founded the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects...” [Carver, 1975]

Gordon Culham was elected President and H.B. Dunington-Grubb was Vice-President.

Frances Blue, an early member, comments that this was, “the depth of the depression and landscape architecture was probably hit harder than any other profession... that did not dim their enthusiasm -- they planned a publication, a botanical garden, numerous schools of landscape architecture...” (F.B., unpublished manuscript).

By 1938 the membership had grown to fifteen. An advertisement for the Society in Canadian Homes & Gardens (15: Sept. 1938, p. 69) lists N. Boudreau, Montreal; Carl Borgstrom, Lorne Park; H.S.M. Carver, Lorne Park; Gordon Culham, Toronto; Norman Dryden, Guelph; H.B. and L.A. Dunington-Grubb, Toronto; Edwin Kay, Toronto; Helen M. Kippax, Toronto; Louis Perron, Montreal; Leonard E. Schlemm, Montreal; Robert Sparks, Kingston; Frances C. Steinhoff, Toronto; J. Vilhelm Stensson, Toronto; and Frederick Todd, Montreal. The roster had begun to include members outside of Ontario.

This early membership of the society reflected both the British and American influences on the profession in Canada. The Beaux Arts architecturally decorative style met the naturalistic, neoromantic style that heralded the ecological approach. The Modern movement with its concern for the interests of society -- housing and public open space -- meshed with the current interest in town planning. (The Town Planning Institute of Canada had ceased to exist and the two professions overlapped for a time.)

Two of the members, Gordon Culham and Frederick Todd, had been associated with the Olmstead Brothers on projects from their Brookline, Massachusetts office. In 1912 Frederick Todd had been asked by the federal agency, the Ottawa Improvement Commission, to make the first proposal for the construction and improvement of the capital area.
Frances Blue comments that, "many of his proposals now form an accepted part of the fabric of Ottawa and the area. Such things as the driveway system; the concept of Gatineau Park; the importance of the waterways; the symbolism of Parliament Hill, all received detailed and comprehensive attention by Mr. Todd" (F.B., manuscript).

The first move toward professional legislation occurred in 1952 when Edwin Kay, "pointed out the desirability of protection by legislation for Landscape Architects similar to that enjoyed by the allied professions of engineering and architecture. The great drawback to this was the lack of a School of Landscape Architecture in Canada... discussions concerning it dragged on for years." (F.B., manuscript).

"In 1954, Mr. Culham was named convener to formulate proposals for the foundation of local chapters of the Society. In 1959, the question of Chapters was decided: that they should be in Montreal - Ottawa, Central Ontario and the Prairie-Pacific Coast areas" (F.B., manuscript). This was the beginning of the movement to divide the CSLA & TP, as it was still titled, into component sections. The shift to independent provincial organizations did not occur until 1962.

"In 1955, the proposed design for the first members' certificates was approved as presented... In 1957, Mr. Austin Floyd prepared the Schedule of Professional Charges and the Agreement between Client and Landscape Architect which are used by members of the Society" (F.B., manuscript).

In 1956 the CSLA & TP incorporated by letters patent, "for the purposes of promoting the Profession of Landscape Architecture... affiliating those who, by profession or through public service, are engaged in promoting this profession... increasing the efficiency and to foster good fellowship of its members... providing an authoritative source of information concerning the profession in Canada... supporting the advancement of service to the public and the profession". (CSLA certificate of membership)

"Over the years the Examining Board has played a very important part in the Society. There have been numerous debates about the entrance standards, which have been won by those who have insisted that the highest be maintained. Until 1959 new members were admitted in very small numbers each year, but in that year we were lucky in being able to admit a record number and that record has been beaten several times in the 1960's. In 1962, the entire roster was double that of a decade earlier; in 1967, the roster is double that of 1962" (F.B., manuscript).

The first publication of the Society was twenty-five years in the making. "Mr. Donald Graham, in 1959, presented copies of a trial number of the publication of our Society which was received most favourably and named The CANADIAN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT" (F.B., manuscript).

"During the 1940's, 50's, and 1960's, the CSLA fees were $12.50 for member[s] at great distance and associates, $25.00 for members in Central Canada. In 1961, the fees were raised to $25.00 for associates and $40.00 for members. The fees were raised again in 1966 to $30.00 for associates and $50.00 for members" (F.B., manuscript).

The constitution of the Society was changed in 1961 and the reference to "Town Planners" was dropped from the title.

In 1963 the first code of ethics was compiled by the members.

"As a result of several years of discussion on the subject of education of Landscape Architects in Canada, the Education Committee felt that 1961 was the time to establish a school. Activity regarding
the course awaited the Ontario Government decision to give university status to the Ontario Agricultural College... A very important event (1962) was the appointment of Victor Chanasyk as Professor of Landscape Architecture at the Department of Horticulture, Ontario Agricultural College (now the School of Landscape Architecture, University of Guelph)...

...In September, 1964, the course in Landscape Architecture was started at the University of Guelph; a real milestone! In 1965, the University of Toronto had a Landscape Architecture curriculum approved by the Senate under the direction of Michael Hough and Richard Strong” (F.B., manuscript).

The change in CSLA from a society of individual members to an organization of component associations began in 1962. “In 1962, Louis Perron was the chairman of the committee which prepared a brief for the Parent Commission on Education in Quebec Province. As a result of the Parent brief it was finally decided that CSLA chapters should bear the names of the Provinces in order to obtain provincial charters” (F.B., manuscript). The Central Chapter of the CSLA, which had been formed in 1960, was renamed the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, and incorporated by letters patent in 1968. Until this time the CSLA had been a predominantly Ontario based organization, but membership in other provinces was steadily increasing, and the legislation required to put the profession on a legally recognized basis would be created through the provinces. From this point on Ontario landscape architects were represented by the OALA, and the CSLA became a parent organization.

Ken Hoyle writes that, “legislation restricting the practice of landscape architecture was required to protect the public -- who were, more and more, trusting the changes of their land to landscape architects -- and to protect the landscape architects from those who did not have the knowledge and skills to advise wisely on changes to the land” (Hoyle, 1989). Landscape architects were feeling the need to publicly define their area of professional expertise, and to gain the credibility that legislation would give them.

Work began immediately on a registration act. A first draft was prepared in 1969, and a second in 1970. In 1971 a brief was presented to the Ontario government. In 1972 a revised version was submitted, but the provincial government, concerned over the existing registered professions, delayed action until a Professional Organizations Committee was established in 1977, and its report given to the Attorney General in 1980 (Hoyle, 1989). During 1981 the by-laws were revised (Glenn Harrington) and the code of ethics rewritten (Jim Stansbury). In 1982 the government indicated that legislation for the profession should not control the practice of landscape architecture, but rather the use of the name. This was generally preferred by the OALA membership. On April 13, 1983 the bill was introduced to the legislature and, in Ken Hoyle’s words: “All hell broke loose. Ryerson objected, Landscape Ontario objected, Flowers Canada objected, individuals objected” (Hoyle, 1989). A year of intense negotiations with the objectors, and revisions to the legislation followed. On April 26, 1984, the revised bill was submitted. Approved by the committee for second reading on May 17th, it had second and third readings on May 25th. On May 29th an Act respecting The Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, Bill Pr37, was given royal assent (Hoyle, 1989).

On this date the letters patent were revoked to enable the Association to continue as a corporation by the special legislative act, having sole legal use of the designation “landscape architect” for the members of the OALA. The Association would be responsible for the standards and conduct of its members.

In June 1983 the membership of the OALA, including the full, associate and affiliate members, had been approximately 300. By October 1985 there were almost 600 members (OALA office history file). The sudden increase in membership was caused by the “grandfather” provisions of the new legislation
which allowed a year for those who had been “substantially earning a living in landscape architecture”, but were not members of the OALA, to join without having to go through an apprenticeship period or taking a professional practice and ethics examination. January 1, 1989 marked the final time limit for the use of the term “landscape architect” by non-members.

Sources:

Blue, Frances, History of the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects, unpublished manuscript.

Frances Blue joined the CSLA & TP in 1938 and became a full member in 1939.

Carver, Humphrey, Compassionate Landscape, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
