

## The History of ASPA

The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) was established in 1939 in response to major changes in the developing field of public administration. In its 60+ years, ASPA has both influenced and been influenced by the field and profession of public administration, in three areas specifically:

- Professionalism in public administration - both domestically and internationally
- Public administration education, theory and research
- Advocacy for public administration and public service

ASPA's roots are in the progressive reform movement that produced major changes in American public administration in the early part of the 20th century. Darrell Pugh, in his excellent history of ASPA and public administration entitled *Looking Back, Moving Forward*, outlines three major developments that formed the backdrop for the creation of ASPA:

- "the emergence of self-conscious practices in public administration brought about during the progressive era through the work...principally [of] those associated with the municipal research bureau movement";
- "the establishment of a national network of public administration organizations in Chicago through the Public Administration Clearing House [PACH] in the 1930s"; and
- "the manifestation of deep concern for the improvement of the management and organization of the federal government precipitated by its burgeoning growth during the 'New Deal' period..."

Concern about management and organization of the federal government resulted in President Franklin Roosevelt's Committee on Administrative Management (better known as the Brownlow Committee after its Chairman), and the subsequent passage of the Reorganization Act of 1939. Both "generated a series of events that ultimately led to the creation of ASPA."

The preamble to the Society's constitution, adopted at the first meeting of the National Council following incorporation of the Society, on October 13, 1945, outlined the purposes of the new organization:

- To facilitate the exchange of knowledge and results of experience among persons interested in or engaged in the field of public administration;
- To encourage the collection, compilation, and dissemination of information on matters relating to public administration;
- To advance generally the science, processes and art of public administration.

When ASPA was first formed, it was housed in Chicago with the Public Administration Clearing House (PACH) at 1313 East 60th Street, in what was known as the "1313 community," which housed other public administration-related organizations. This was important, as ASPA was founded in part to support and sustain connections among the different public administration organizations and the different functions and specialties that comprise the field of public administration. Subsequently, ASPA was housed in space owned by the University of Chicago, reinforcing ASPA's role in linking research and theory to practice. In 1964, the Society's leadership decided to relocate ASPA headquarters to Washington, DC, where it has remained since.

### Significant Events in ASPA's History

- ASPA is established at American Political Science Association Conference (December 27, 1939)
- Public Administration Clearing House in Chicago agrees to serve as secretariat (1940)
- Chicago holds first ever chapter meeting (May 27, 1940)
- ASPA launches PAR (January 1941)
- ASPA hires first Executive Director (1956)

- ASPA office moves from Chicago to Washington (1964)
- NAPA established as ASPA affiliate (1967)
- NAPA incorporates, separates from ASPA (December 1970)
- COMPA established as affiliate (1971)
- The first section is established - Section on International and Comparative Administration (December 1973)
- Phil Rutledge becomes first African-American President of ASPA (1974)
- ASPA members vote to expand size of Council from 34 to 46 members (1975)
- Nesta Gallas becomes ASPA's first woman President (1976)
- NASPAA is formed (1976)
- ASPA and NAPA establish the National Public Service Awards (1982)
- ASPA adopts strategic plan (1998)
- ASPA members approve new bylaws, vote to decrease size of Council from 42 to 21 members (1999)

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**ASPA's Executive Directors**

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