

# Foreword

Who could have predicted the many events and innovations that have shaped our country and our world over the past 150 years? Certainly not the 12 engineers who met one evening in November 1852 to form what is now the American Society of Civil Engineers. What has remained constant throughout the past century and a half is the role of civil engineers as the stewards of our infrastructure. Everyday they face new challenges to meet the needs of an ever-evolving society.

In the 19th century, civil engineers built the transcontinental rail system linking our still nascent country from coast to coast, and great bridges to serve the growing urban centers. During the 20th century, change continued to accelerate as civil engineers developed safe drinking water systems for all Americans, created the Interstate Highway System that undergirds our country and economy, and turned their attention to solving the environmental problems of an industrialized, urban society. Today, as our country continues to grow and prosper, the warp and woof of the fabric of America is the infrastructure created by civil engineers.

In 2002, ASCE celebrates that day in 1852 when the influence of the Society and its members began to shape our world. To tell the story of the founding, growth and success of the country's first national professional engineering organization, ASCE presents an updated version of *The American Civil Engineer*, originally published in 1974. While the detailed picture painted in the earlier edition remains, we have added a colorful portrait of the past 25 years of challenges and successes of the Society and the civil engineering profession.

We look back at 150 years of glorious achievements of civil engineers and ASCE, and forward at the 21st century full of opportunities. For ASCE, its

growing role as the global leader in civil engineering, the changes in knowledge management and delivery, “raising the academic bar” for professional practice, and continuing to serve the civil engineering specialties under one umbrella, present exciting challenges in the decades ahead.

I think the 12 founders would be very proud to see how far the Society has come in developing a network of 125,000 engineers that communicate and work together for the good of civil engineering and society. This book is a tribute to those founding members of the American Society of Civil Engineers and to all the civil engineers who work every day to build a better quality of life for us all.

H. GERARD SCHWARTZ, JR., Ph.D., P.E., F. ASCE  
*President, American Society of Civil Engineers*