Introduction

The First North American Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy, held in San Antonio, Texas, in January 2011, was the first major event sponsored by the American Society of Greek and Latin Epigraphy. The publication here of a selection of the papers delivered on that occasion thus provides a suitable opportunity to record briefly the origin and early history of an organization now approaching the end of its twentieth year.

During the early months of 1995 a young Canadian scholar, B.H. (at the time “Hudson”) McLean, then serving as Executive Director of St. John’s College of the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg and already at work on the well-known handbook of Greek epigraphy of the Hellenistic and Roman periods that he would publish several years later, conceived the idea of founding in North America a society of epigraphers similar to the international organization created in Paris in 1972, L’Association Internationale d’Épigraphie Grecque et Latine (AIEGL), the principal activities of which had been (and continue to be) centered mainly in Europe.1 Over the following months McLean approached half a dozen epigraphers in Canada and the United States and one from the United Kingdom to canvass their potential interest in starting a North American association. Receiving positive replies all around, McLean pursued the idea and by the end of the summer had secured from the sitting President of AIEGL, Silvio Panciera, provisional support for the formation of a North American association of epigraphers that would complement rather than compete with the international association, and he had assembled an Executive Committee of eight that comprised a nearly equal balance of Canadian and American members: John Bodel (Rutgers University), George W. Houston (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), Barbara M. Levick (University of Oxford), B. Hudson McLean (University of Manitoba), Léopold Migeotte (Université de Laval), James Russell (University of British Columbia), Stephen V. Tracy (The Ohio State University), and John S. Traill (University of Toronto).

At the end of the year, at the annual gathering of the American Philological Association (APA) and the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) in San Diego, an initial organizational meeting of the Executive Committee resulted in the appointment by consensus of three officers, whose terms of office were to begin on January 1, 1996: a President (B. Hudson McLean), a Vice-President (John Bodel), and a Secretary-Treasurer (George W. Houston). Collectively, the

1 McLean 2002.
three officers would constitute the Executive Committee, and the remaining members would make up an advisory council of Members-at-Large. It was also agreed that annual business and planning meetings, at least for the foreseeable future, should be scheduled in conjunction with the annual AIA/APA meetings, wherever held. The first formal business meeting was convened the following year in New York City on December 28, 1996.

Throughout 1996 and the first half of 1997, this group (minus Barbara Levick, who did not participate in any of the discussions and withdrew from the committee at the end of 1996, when a similar organization was founded in Britain), in consultation with the President and executive officers of AIEGL, drew up a constitution, which was first adopted by the ASGLE membership and was then formally endorsed by the Bureau and Comité of AIEGL at the Eleventh International Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy in Rome in September 1997. The ASGLE constitution provided for an Executive Committee of three officers (a President, Vice-President, and Secretary-Treasurer), the immediate Past President, a Senior Editor, and two Members-at-Large to be elected by popular vote by the membership. The terms of the President, Vice-President, and Past President were set at two years, those of the Secretary-Treasurer, the two Members-at-Large, and the Senior Editor at three years, with terms to be staggered in order to provide for a rotation of elected members each year. An invitation to join the new association was sent out to North American epigraphers and ancient historians in the summer of 1996, and by the end of the year the nascent American Society of Greek and Latin Epigraphy had enrolled 82 members (for calendar year 1997) and had mounted a simple website under the direction of an Information Coordinator (later Web-Editor), Tom Elliott, then at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

In 1997 honorary lifetime memberships in the Society were awarded by unanimous consent of the Executive Committee to Joyce S. Gordon, the noted Latin palaeographer, and Christian Habicht, whose history of Hellenistic Athens, then newly published in English, provided a focus for the first ASGLE paper session at the December meetings of the AIA/APA in Chicago. In the