

AICP STUDY GUIDE

Episode 5: How Did We Get Here?

And welcome to the fifth – already? - episode of the VERY UNofficial AICP Study Guide Podcast.

I'm Jonathan Miller - thanks so much for joining - and now that we are all set with what to expect and studying, etc. etc. etc., it's time to get into some of the nitty gritty. That said, we won't jump in head first.

Instead, we'll do a little toe dip and get a topic out of the way that you'll absolutely need to know, and can pretty much be covered in one short episode:

The history of the American Planning Association, better known as the APA. I know, I know, super exciting stuff today, bear with me though, because there's a really good chance you'll get at least one question on this.

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Let's start out by turning back the clock to - oh, I don't know - May 21st and 22nd of 1909 in Washington D.C. Sound specific? Absolutely. That's because that would be the date of the very first National Conference on City Planning and Congestion - that's people, not traffic.

Anyways, the conference was organized by a gentleman named Benjamin Marsh - and we'll talk more about him in future episodes for his book "An Introduction to City Planning: Democracy's Challenge and the American City." But for now at least, we're only concerned with the fact that he organized the first National Conference on City Planning and Congestion. That was in Washington D.C. on May 21st and 22nd of 1909.

National Conferences on City Planning were held every year thereafter, but there still wasn't a centralized organization for planners, and some of the planners back then knew it. Fast Forward to May 7th, 8th, and 9th of 1917 at the 9th National Conference on City Planning, which was held in Kansas City.

Knowing a little something extra was missing, the planners there decided to form the American City Planning Institute - OR ACPI - with none other than Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., as the very first President of the American City Planning Institute.

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From here, the professional organization evolved, developed, and progressed. It held conferences every year, by the way; and I'm not going to list all of those, nor do I think you need to know ALL of them.

Anyways, The American City Planning Institute - in conjunction with the National Conferences on City Planning - in 1925 published the first issue of "City Planning". That was the name of the publication, "City Planning."

This publication is relatively important because it's essentially the predecessor to the Journal of the American Planning Association that I/we get quarterly.

Fast Forward another 9 years to 1934, where the American Society of Planning Officials - or ASPO - was founded for planners, planning commissioners, and planning-related public officials. An easy way to remember that the ASPO was the second organization name and not the first is that there really weren't that many planning officials around in the earliest days to constitute an entire organization. Obviously, the city planning profession had to grow to a point where there were enough "planning officials" to even create an organization.

Now, here's where it starts to get tricky. The ACPI - American City Planning Institute, and ASPO - American Society of Planning Officials, are actually two separate organizations at this point in time; and remember, we're still in 1934.

Moving up another 5 years, we get to 1939 where the American City Planning Institute - that's ACPI - reorganizes and changes its name - you know, just to confuse things - to the American Institute of Planners, or AIP.

So, to recap, the two names with "institute" in it are related, with the society of planning officials still operating separately. Basically, the ACPI dropped the "C" and flipped the "PI."

In 1939 though, when the ACPI changed to AIP, they also formally defined their role as:

"The planning of the unified development of urban communities and their environs, and of states, regions, and the nation as expressed through determination of the comprehensive arrangement of land uses and land occupancy, and the regulation thereof." Sums it up nicely.

Now we enter a lull. The next few decades are characterized by not much. In terms of the history of the APA that is - don't extrapolate that - a lot happened actually, but we aren't on those topics yet.

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So, 1967 rolls around and the American Institute of Planners – AIP - decide to amend their formal definition that they came up with.

This amendment, known as the "Wetmore Amendment," attempted to be more inclusive of the organization by doing away with the whole bit about, "the comprehensive arrangement of land uses and land occupancy, and the regulation thereof." Doing so effectively welcomed in social and physical planners who were otherwise overlooked.

A few years later, in 1971, the American Institute of Planners – AIP – adopts a code of ethics for us professional planners; apparently the ASPO is pretty quiet during these times. The AIP - American Institute of Planners – also begins administering exams for membership in 1977.

And then, in 1978, the American Institute of Planners – AIP – and the ASPO - American Society of Planning Officials - come together to become one giant, mega planning organization that we now know as the American Planning Association, or APA. That's 1978: Merging in 1978.

This new, mega planning organization called the APA was:

"Organized exclusively for charitable, educational, literary and scientific purposes to advance the art and science of planning and the activity of planning – physical, economic, and social – at the local, regional, state, and national levels."

The new, mega planning organization also, within its merging, founded the AICP certification.

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So, now we're cooking under one big organization. In 1980, the APA establishes the Associated Collegiate Schools of Planning in order to represent academia in the planning profession, and they publish their first issue of "The Journal of Education and Planning Research" in 1981.

In 1989, the Planning Accreditation Board, or PAB, becomes the only agency who can accredit colleges and universities in Planning, and finally, in 1999, the AICP creates the College of Fellows in order to recognize the long-tenured and accomplished AICP members - that's when you see the FAICP instead of just the AICP.

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And that's the quick run-down of how the APA came to be:

1909 - first planning conference in DC;

1917 - American City Planners Institute founded at the conference in Kansas City, and Olmsted Jr. was the first President;

1934 - American Society of Planning Officials founded;

1939 - American City Planners Institute changes their name to American Institute of Planners;

1971 - American Institute of Planners adopts a code of ethics;

1978 - American Institute of Planners and American Society of Planning Officials merge into the American Planning Association, with the American Institute of Certified Planners as the official certification;

1999 - College of Fellows is added to the AICP.

And that's about it in a nutshell.

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Well, thanks again for tuning in and sticking with me through one of the less exciting topics. As always, all of the links for the references can be found in the show notes. Now that we are getting into the material, I want to give you a question to mull over after each episode. You know, to see if you were paying attention at all.

So, riddle me this: What two organizations combined to form the APA as we know it, and what year did they merge in?" Think about it. Listen to the episode again if you have to, and tune in next episode to hear the answer.

If you have any questions that you want to follow-up on, feel free to reach out to me at theeveryunofficialaicpguide@gmail.com. Also, don't forget to subscribe to this podcast so you can follow along with future episodes, help prepare for the exam and supplement your other study regimens and all that jazz.

Make sure you tune in next week, as we'll cover some colonial planning like Philly and Savannah. Sounds super cool, so don't miss it.

Thanks again, 'till next time.

Links:

APA History Link:

<https://www.planning.org/history/#:~:text=On%20October%201978%20the,American%20Society%20of%20Planning%20Officials.&text=We%20have%20grown%20from%20an,17%20000%20are%20certified%20by%20AICP.>

MIT Archives on AIP:

<http://world.std.com/~mehopper/Pro/AIP.htm>

List of APA Conferences:

<https://www.planning.org/conference/future-previous/>