

## **History of the CGS Gavel**

By Doug VanDine, April 11, 2017

The history of the CGS gavel is incomplete. So far, as gleaned from various CGS documents and from discussions with CGS members the history is as follows:

The gavel, its case and strike plate, were designed and built by Kazimir Olpinski, a retired CGS member from Beaconsfield, QC. What is not known is in what year it was designed and built? At who's request, or was it Mr. Olpinski's initiative? And nothing is known of Mr. Olpinski.

It was believed to have first been used in 1984 at the CGS Board of Directors meeting, when A.G. (Tony) Stermac was the CGS President. For a number of years it was ceremonially passed from CGS President to CGS President. It is not known when that tradition stopped.

The gavel was assembled from various pieces of wood including:

- a piece of Douglas Fir taken from a timber pile used to construct the Cave and Basin Spa in Banff, AB in 1914 (donated by Jack Clark, CGS Past President, 1979-1980)
- a piece of wood from the 1884 Cornwall, ON, St. Lawrence River canal lock gate (donated by the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority)
- a piece of greenheart timber from the 1959 Beauharnois, QC lock fender (also donated by the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority)

The strike plate for the gavel was made from a piece of spruce recovered from a glacial till borrow pit at the Mica Dam damsite, BC and donated by W.L. Low. The piece of spruce came from a six foot long tree trunk embedded in the till about 25 m below the original ground surface, and was carbon-dated from about 23,600 years ago. Nothing is known about Mr. Low. Currently the whereabouts of the strike plate is unknown.

It is known that Mr. Olpinski also provided local wood and built a wooden case for the gavel and strike plate. Although the whereabouts of the case is currently unknown, it is known that the main body of the case is ash, the base section is white pine and the lid is maple. Fastened to the lid is a CGS plaque on which the names of some CGS Presidents are engraved. The case was designed and built so that there would be ample room for the inclusion of other artifacts of geotechnical significance or for records of notable geotechnical achievements.

If anyone can shed further light on the history of the gavel, or the history and whereabouts of the strike plate and wooden case, please contact [heritage@cgs.ca](mailto:heritage@cgs.ca) or the CGS National Office.