

NEWSLETTER
OF THE
OPTOMETRIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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'Tis good to be home:

It is not easy to resume this editorial role in the recording of history when my locum tenens is an acknowledged, if not the, expert in historical matters related to optics, visual science, and optometry. On several occasions around this globe, even close to the antipode, I discovered the name of John Levene to be almost as familiar as many a household word, especially in science history circles. My feelings were a bit like those one might imagine a practitioner might have if his locum tenens were Dr. F. C. Donders.

The three issues Dr. Levene edited during my absence contain a wealth of information which, under ordinary circumstances, is hard to get. I sometimes wonder if the reason that optometric history is so infrequently a part of optometric conversation, or a speech topic, is merely the fact that there has not been a convenient source of reliable and accurate information. Though I have been home only a few weeks, I discover that I have already had three occasions to get information from earlier issues of this NEWSLETTER. One was for a course lecture, one to answer an inquiry from a friend, and the third to refresh myself on a point that was discussed in a small social gathering.

Someday, surely, the accumulated issues will be indexed for easier reference as a sort of primary resource or as a lead to more extensive sources.

Your cooperation is necessary, of course. The Society exists to enable you to contribute, so please pass on your little, or big, gems of information or observations, or inquiry, for inclusion in the NEWSLETTER.

Historical Impact:

Historians must continuously weigh the significance of events to make their interpretations reliable and valid. An event that drastically influenced the direction of optometry was the now classic Markham v. Wood, Abrahams case which was tried before Mr. Justice Ridley and a special jury on October 24-26, 1910, in Manchester, England, and retried before the Lord Chief Justice of England, with a special jury, on March 14-16, 1911.

This malpractice suit established the optometrist's responsibility to detect ocular pathology and to advise his patient accordingly. In the first trial the jury could not reach an agreement. In the second trial the jury decided in favor of the plaintiff (the patient).

The details of the two trials, the extensive and confusing testimony, and editorial commentary are fascinatingly covered in three issues of The Optician and Photographic Trade Journal, as follows:

October 28, 1910, Vol. 40, No. 1022:

"The Optician's Legal Standing," pp. 101-102

"Legal Position of Sight-Testing Opticians," pp. 103-118

March 17, 1911, Vol. 41, No. 1041:

"The Legal Position of Optometrists," pp. 19-24

March 24, 1911, Vol. 41, No. 1042:

"The Litigation and After," pp. 27-28

"Optical Rays and Opinions," pp. 28-29

"Voice of the Trade," p. 29

"The Legal Position of Optometrists," pp. 30-42

What was the impact? Simply that optometry acquired a professional responsibility by losing its first malpractice case! Yes, the "sight-testing opticians" of the day rallied in support of the firm of Messrs. Wood and Abrahams and the firm's guilty refracting optician, Mr. Thomas, but to no avail. Miss Markham won.

This crucial decision influenced the educational and professional patterns of optometry throughout the British Empire and other English-speaking nations.

An Optometric Reminisce-In?

Like the appearance and disappearance of Kilroy, the hyphenated attachment of the preposition "in" to a verb, as in "teach-in," to represent a group discussion that is apparently inadequately connoted otherwise, may not stay with us long, and future people may wonder what it meant. But, punningly, it is indeed an "in" term at the moment. So, why not an optometric reminisce-in? This could be a gathering of optometric history buffs and critics, perhaps with a few stimulating refreshments at hand, where each participant would be prepared to contribute a gem of optometric history, an incident he remembers, a story he was told, an observation he made, or even an item of optometric folklore. This could follow the day's business and education of a convention or congress as a delightful evening's pastime, whether attended by only a half dozen, or a hundred.

In fact, the notion is so fascinating to me that I may try to initiate something like this at the time of the A.O.A. Congress in Houston next June. Let me know how this strikes you.

Lomonossov and Optics:

The Lomonossov State University in Moscow bears the name of a scientist who contributed significantly to theory of light and color and to the building of optical instruments and the manufacture of optical glass. His name was Michail Wassiljewitsch Lomonossov (1711-1765). A very interesting review of his optical contributions, with seven illustrations and eight references, is made by Wilhelm Schütz of Jena, East Germany, in JENA REVIEW, Vol. 15, No. 6, 1970, pp. 315-320.

Old Settlers' Remedies:

The September issue of the Canadian Journal of Optometry (Vol. 32, No. 2, pp. 65-66) lists early remedies for 16 conditions related to the eyes and vision. Among these conditions are "Eyes Bleared," "Dull Sight" and "Clouds Flying Before the Eye." The list was abstracted by optometrist R. A. Rosere of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, from a compilation entitled "Old Settlers' Remedies" by Marion Robertson for the Cape Sable Historical Society, Barrington, Nova Scotia. The sources date back to the 16th century.

"Living" History:

Back in 1948 I published what I then thought was a note of historical interest because it referred to an event that occurred in 1931. It involved the court case of a South African optometrist named J. L. Saks, the decision of which continues to be a legal cornerstone for South African optometry.

Today Optometrist Saks serves his colleagues in the vital, and vibrant, role of Editor of the South African Optometrist. Fondly known as "J. L." by his friends around the world, he keeps this journal competitive with the best.

Another Museum?

A 300-year-old pair of tortoise rim spectacles made in China, a 150-year-old pair of multifocals, a 50-year-old battery-run ophthalmoscope, an 1866 ophthalmic chair, and a 100-pair frame collection donated by C. C. Tait, O.D., retired, are a few of the items in the historical collection of the University of Waterloo School of Optometry. Dr. E. J. Fisher, Director, hopes that someday these will be exhibited in a new optometry building. In the meantime, every precaution is being taken to preserve and add to the collection.

A detailed write-up appeared in the February, 1971, issue of AOA News.

So Who Was Cho Tso?

When I wrote my comments on the history of spectacles in my book OPTOMETRY (1948) I included the simple statement, "The old Chinese opticians attributed the invention of spectacles to Cho Tso."

Now I have received a letter from Mr. T. C. Chang, a history buff employed at the Hong Kong Optical Co., Ltd., 57 Queen's Road, C., Hong Kong. Says Mr. Chang, "Last year, I read some excerpts from Joseph Needham's Science and Civilization in China wherein Needham mentioned Cho Tso too. I tried very hard to find out the original Chinese name of Cho Tso, but of no avail. I still do not know who this man is--known to foreign scholars as Cho Tso."

My source (or should I say, alibi?) was Albert Barnett on pages 85 and 87 of The 1943 Year Book of Optometry published by the New York State Optometric Association. From an acknowledgment at the close of Barnett's article I suspect he may have derived this from personal correspondence with Mr. O. P. Rasmussen.

I checked Needham's 1962 issue of SCIENCE AND CIVILIZATION IN CHINA, Vol. 4, Part 1, Cambridge, and found no reference to Cho Tso under "Eye-glasses and spectacles." However, he makes a number of references which have substantial phonetic similarity to "Cho Tso."

"Milestones" or Stumbling Blocks?

The abovementioned Mr. Chang also kindly put into writing, at my insistence, a couple of points that had amused him in reading the familiar Bausch & Lomb book entitled "Milestones in Optical History," 1954. He says:

"Page 6: The Picture. Showing two men writing with feathers, one with right hand, other with left hand.

Firstly, the Chinese people never used feathers for writing purpose. Before the 'Brush' (Chinese pen) was invented by General Moon-Tien towards 220 B. C., Chinese characters were carved on bamboo (to keep historical records) and on tortoise-shell and animal-bones (for use as oracles). Moon-Tien used deer-hair and wood-rod to make the first 'Brush' and since then, carving was replaced by writing.

Secondly, the Chinese people never write with left hand.

"Page 7: The Text. Spectacles in Ancient China.

It is quite true that superstition and etiquette governed their use, and that glasses were worn to indicate position, possessions, professions, and intelligence, but not idiocy. As I told you, in old China, when a youngster paid a visit to an elder, he must remove his glasses, otherwise, it would mean disrespect, even insult.

It is impossible that glasses were in use during Confucius time. It seemed that glasses were not invented by the Chinese people, but were imported into China through Central Asia, and became widely adopted during the Ming Dynasty. That Confucius relieved the eyes of a cobbler with glasses is a ludicrous error. Confucius never wrote anything by himself. His students took notes of his sayings, and compiled them into a book. As far as I know, 'cobbler' was not mentioned in any Chinese classical books, not to say Confucius book, for shoe-mending was considered a mean job, not worth mentioning in a respectable scholastic work.

Tortoise-shell frames are very expensive and easily broken. However, we here in Hongkong still sell a lot of them, for some of the older people do believe that tortoise-shell brings long life. Some people are wearing glasses at the advice of fortune-tellers, because glasses may change the facial appearance of the wearer, thereby bringing him good luck.

In old China, it was believed that crystal and quartz had a cooling effect being beneficial to the eyes (particularly brown-crystal, current prices in Hongkong US \$100.-to US \$250.- per pair), while optical lenses being made through a fire-process were deleterious to the eyes. The specialist advised people to use 'old' lenses, so as to let the fire inside the lenses die out."

All of this merely continues to demonstrate that in the recording of history the criterion of plausibility is persistently more popular than validity and reliability.

Change of Address:

O.H.S. member Stephen M. Oppenheimer, formerly of Memphis, Tennessee, is now at 4272 Canterbury Drive, El Paso, Texas 79002.

James F. Dickson, Jr., O.D., writes:

Dated "1-5-70," from P. O. Box 928, Lindsay, California 93247, and stored in my O.H.S. file many months, is a letter from Dr. Dickson in which he says, "I have over 1,000 pairs of antique eye wear, and my last quest has unearthed 4-5 other O.D.'s and two other persons with similar interests."

"Peekaboo, I almost see you":

This is the title of an Ogden Nash poem dedicated to the inconveniences of two pair of glasses, "one for reading Erle Stanley Gardner's Perry Mason and Keats' 'Endymion' with, And the other for walking around without saying Hello to strange wymion with."

The poem is in a collection of Nash's poems entitled PRIVATE DINING ROOM, published circa 1953 by Little, Brown and Company, Boston. It appears from the credits that all of the poems in the collection had appeared previously in periodicals, but where "Peekaboo" first appeared I did not determine.

New members are always welcome:

No, the O.H.S. does not have an application form. All that you need to tell an interested person is to send his name, address, and \$5.00 to the Optometric Historical Society, 7000 Chippewa Street, St. Louis, Missouri 63119.

Naturally, we would also like to have him write a letter about his interests or hobbies, especially so we might excerpt a paragraph or two, or a sentence, or even a phrase, for the NEWSLETTER.

International Optometric(al) Association:

In the January 6, 1921, issue of The Optical Journal and Review of Optometry, page 54, appeared a brief commentary describing the contents of some correspondence between W. G. Kett of Sydney, Australia, and W. S. Todd of Hartford, Connecticut, then Chairman of the American Optometric Association Department of Education. Among other things Dr. Todd suggested to Dr. Kett the formation of an "International Optometric Association" and invited the Australians to join in a movement for a World's Optical Congress to be held in Rochester, New York, in 1925. Dr. Kett reported back that he had just returned from the third interstate conference of the Australian Optometrical Association where he "had no difficulty persuading the conference to affiliate with the American Optometric Association..." He added, "With regard to the name of the association the conference thought that a name such as the International Optometrical Association would be more fitting."

Down under:

"The Development of Optometric Education in New Zealand" is an M.A. thesis by P. R. de Lacey, February, 1964, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. The author is an optometrist. The thesis is over 100 pages long.

A microfilm copy has been ordered for the Indiana University Optometry Library.

"Eye Glasses of Old"

An 18" x 24" poster in color, depicting early eyeglasses, suitable for framing, is available at \$2.00 from Better Vision Institute, Inc., 230 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10017. The poster is entitled "Eye Glasses of Old."

Donated:

D. R. Reed, O.D., of LaPorte, Indiana, recently donated 19 pairs of spectacles to the Optometry Museum Collection of Indiana University.

From Puerto Rico:

In August, 1970, O.H.S. member Antonio Pacheco, O.D., P. O. Box 10223, Santurce, Puerto Rico 00908, sent me an autographed copy of his booklet "Desarrollo Historico y Legal de La Junta Examinadora de Optometras de Puerto Rico 1898 a 1970," published and copyrighted 1970. For the library he also included a copy of his own English translation, Legal and Historical Development of the Board of Examiners of Optometrists of Puerto Rico, 1898-1970.

In his letter of transmittal he comments, "In my history I suggest to the Institute of Culture of Puerto Rico, a government agency, to create an Archive of the History of all the Professions in Puerto Rico. They have accepted the idea and the Executive Director of the Institute is going to appoint me his advisor."

The booklet is both factual and fascinating. For example, it includes a table of "Optometric Sciences Issued in Puerto Rico" showing 23 optometric licenses issued between 1903 and 1924 by the Board of Medical Examiners. Six of these licensees are still living. The first Puerto Rico Optometric Act was approved in 1930, and, to date, the Board of Examiners in Optometry has issued 55 additional licenses.

Dr. Pacheco is one of a family of optometrists representing three generations. "These three generations" writes Dr. Pacheco, "add up to 127 years of optometric life."

John C. Eberhardt library preserved:

About a year ago Dr. Richard L. Hopping, now President-elect of the American Optometric Association, wrote O.H.S. Secretary Dablemont as follows:

"Recently I obtained from a retired optometrist the optometric library of his former associate, Dr. John C. Eberhardt.

"Dr. Eberhardt, who practiced in Dayton, Ohio, was the sixth president (1903) of the A.O.A. It is my understanding that he is the person credited with coining the word 'optometry.'

"Enclosed please find a list of the books that I have in my possession. Should you desire any of them for the A.O.A. library please let me know and I will be glad to forward them on. Otherwise I will keep them for my personal library. They are in excellent condition."

Dr. Hopping added the following postscript:

"Also please find a list of some books from the library of George H. Leland, a local inventor, who had patented the Leland Refractor which is written up in Berens and Zuckerman's book Diagnostic Examination of the Eye."

H. W. Hofstetter, Editor