

NEWSLETTER

OF THE

OPTOMETRIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(7000 Chippewa Street, Saint Louis, Missouri, U. S. A. 63119)

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Incorporated we will be:

Though our friendly but nevertheless official by-laws declare intent to comply with all laws relating to not-for-profit organizations eligible for tax exemption and for receiving income tax deductible gifts, we are advised that incorporation makes filing for tax exempt status easier and more orderly. In December we received the offer of the legal services of Thomas E. Eichhorst, Esq., and the professional accounting services of Albert M. Katz, C.P.A., Staff Counsel and Comptroller, respectively, to the American Optometric Association, to process the incorporation and the necessary filing of application papers for the Optometric Historical Society.

The Executive Board voted unanimously to accept these generous offers.

Optometric Reminisce-in planned:

A sharing of historical tidbits of optometric interest will be the theme of a two-hour reminisce-in planned for the 75th Anniversary A.O.A. Congress. The meeting is scheduled from 2:00 to 4:00 P.M. on Tuesday, June 20 at the Sheraton-Jefferson Hotel in St. Louis. Admission will be free and open to all who are interested.

The reminisce-in is co-sponsored by the Optometric Historical Society and the American Optometric Association Committee on A.O.A. History. Tape recordings will be made for the oral history archives of the A.O.A.

The program will consist of a series of five-minute talks by volunteers selected to share with the group their accounts of generally unknown or otherwise inadequately described events or personalities of historical interest to optometrists. It is anticipated that these may range from the purely fascinating to the significantly documentary type of exposition, and from the seriously tragic to the hilariously funny episodes in optometry's past. Some may relate to personal experiences, observations, gleanings from unusual or esoteric sources, intimate acquaintanceships, or exclusively held files of information.

Individuals wishing to volunteer their experiences in the reminisce-in are requested to notify Dr. H. W. Hofstetter, Indiana University, Division of Optometry, Bloomington, Indiana 47401, in advance, merely stating in five or ten words what they wish to relate.

"Hammon Says:"

Dr. James H. Hammon, (1876-1944) could easily have been the most colorful, and some would say the most flamboyant, optometrist in history. Through the kindness of his daughter Ruth, Mrs. John W. Shepard, a brilliant and vivacious person herself, we obtained a loan of five scrapbooks of more than 2,000 newspaper clippings written both by and about Dr. Hammon during the period 1935 - 1942. Approximately 500 pages of Xerox copy were recently made and bound in a single volume entitled "Scrapbooks of a Hoosier Optometrist" and placed in the Indiana University Library.

As an almost daily advertisement in a Vincennes, Indiana, newspaper Dr. Hammon wrote pungent commentary on current events, personalities in the news, and political issues under the caption, "Hammon Says:" He was master of the clever phrase and ruthless in his choice of targets for attack, particularly in criticism of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

He was variously identified as scholar, author, historian, inventor, adventurer, and community leader in newspaper articles. His "world's most completely equipped optical clinic and laboratory" was fully air-conditioned as early as 1936. He indulged in such commercial adventures as a price-cutting gasoline service station, tourist cabins, and a cafe. One New York newspaper gave him principal credit for helping to nab Mr. Joseph R. Weil, King of the Con Men, also called Yellow Kid, in 1939. He was listed in Who's Who and identified as inventor of the Panoptic bifocal.

It would be hard to find a resident of Vincennes of Dr. Hammon's time who would not have known him. I would gamble that even Red Skelton (a native of Vincennes) was well acquainted with him!

McFatrigh and Murine:

"MURINE COMPANY DISCOVERS DOCUMENTS" is the headline of a brief but fascinating report on some recent Illinois College of Optometry museum acquisitions relating to Dr. James B. McFatrigh, founder of the Northern Illinois College of Ophthalmology and Otology in 1872 and of the Murine Company in 1897. The report is in the ICO Newsletter, Vol. XII, No. 3, January-February 1972, p. 9.

Walter A. Springborg, O.D. (1891-1971)

"He used to go scouting around Detroit for museum items, archival materials of all sorts, old books & journals. When he had a carload he would drive to St. Louis with his goodies and give us lectures on each item. That was a joy!"

So wrote our own O.H.S. Secretary-Treasurer Maria Dablemont and enclosed four pages from The Michigan Optometrist, Vol. 50, No. 7, July 1971, front cover and pp. 2-4, extolling his virtues and contributions to optometry and to numerous social causes.

In expression of condolence and respect Maria's husband , Mr. Earl Dablemont, 4902a Jamison, St. Louis, Missouri 63109, made a cash contribution to the O.H.S. in Dr. Springborg's memory. The O.H.S. reciprocated by extending Mr. Dablemont a complimentary membership, especially when we learned that he, though not himself an optometrist, reads this Newsletter a bit avidly.

Thanks, Earl.

More on Sheard:

In the previous issue of the Newsletter some very convincing but nevertheless circumstantial evidence was cited to answer positively the question of whether Dr. Charles Sheard was really an optometrist. Now comes a quotation from an article by George T. Warren, O.D., entitled "Charles Sheard: Optometry's Bright Star", in The Southern Optometrist, Vol. 7, No. 3, November 1953, pp. 19-21, which surely puts the matter to rest.

Said Dr. Warren,

"We of Washington City are proud that Dr. Sheard holds a license to practice optometry in the District of Columbia and pays the renewal fee promptly each year. He is an honorary member of several state societies and provinces of Canada and we believe he holds licenses in one or more states."

Hero Chamberlin's father an optometrist:

On June 4-6, 1927, just two weeks after Lindbergh's famous flight, Clarence D. Chamberlin made the headlines by piloting a plane from Mineola, N.J., to Eisleben, Germany, for a new nonstop distance record. His was the first trans-atlantic passenger flight, his passenger being Chas. A. Levine.

Clarence was the son of Elizie C. Chamberlin, O.D., a Denison, Iowa, Optometrist.

Wisconsin history:

Marguerite Eberl, O.D., Chairman of the Wisconsin Optometric Association Historical Committee, is collecting reports of their administrations from former presidents of the Wisconsin Optometric Association. These will be published as received. The first of this series of reports is by Marshall A. Marvelli, O.D., President in 1951-53. It appeared in the Vol. 16, No. 1, Jan.-Feb., 1972 issue of the Journal of the Wisconsin Optometric Association, p. 7.

A letter from Tony:

"Querido amigo:

"I want to express my gratitude for the note published about my Optometric History in the Newsletter of April 1971.

The Newsletter gives me the opportunity to learn about the history of International Optometry which was not available before its publication. Keep up the good work and Buena Suerte.

"In Volume I (2) of April 1970 of the Newsletter you mentioned the 'Charter Members' and I will like to know if I belong 'in this proud category' as you express in the Newsletter. For me it will be a great distinction as I will be the first Optometrist in Puerto Rico to become a Charter Member of a National Optometric Society. I have the feeling that all the Optometrists of Puerto Rico as well as the People of Puerto Rico should be proud to have its Optometric Flag flying through a Charter Member in a National Optometric Society.

"Best of luck to you and all the good friends in the O.H.S. and I remain.

"Tu amigo,

"Dr. Antonio Pacheco  
P. O. Box 10223  
Santurce, Puerto Rico 00908"

O.H.S. member Leeds writes:

"Enjoyed the last bulletin. I happen to own 'Letters on Natural Magic' by Brewster, the 1833 edition from London. Cost me \$7.00. If you'd like to see it, I'll send it down. Also have 2 copies of his 'Treatise on Optics', but that's not as unusual.

"Also have 'Bifocals' by Bugbee, & that was harder to get than I had anticipated. Enjoy your remarks, as always.

"Jim"

Dr. Earl J. Hunt writes:

"Enclosed is my canceled check of the first contribution which was given to the Optometric Historical Society as a memorial to my mother, Mrs. Idella Mae Hunt. The contribution was to be used by the Society to further preserve and expand the existing museum at the American Optometric Association headquarters in St. Louis. You had requested that it be returned for the Archives."

(The check will be framed for display with appropriate legend. H.W.H.)

"I read with interest in the July 1971 Newsletter where O.H.S. member Dr. James P. Leeds was intrigued by the title of a book, ANTIQUE LOOKING GLASSES AND FRAMES, ENGLAND, 1700 - 1800. Don't feel too bad, Jim. The same thing happened to me as I perused a Publishers Central Bureau booklist and decided to order ENGLISH LOOKING GLASSES, A Study of the Glass, Frames and Makers (1670-1820). Looking glasses, I discovered, are mirrors."

Dr. Hunt's letter also included names of several memorials to optometrists and friends of optometry, reported elsewhere in this Newsletter.

#### A gathering of giants:

Recently I had occasion to obtain an interlibrary loan of an 1863 publication under the title of Congres Periodique International D'Ophthalmologie, a report of the second international ophthalmological Congress held in Paris in 1862. The volume was so brittle and fragile as to make one feel in violation of some kind of code just to open it. In fact there simply was no way to go through it page by page without causing tiny bits of damage here and there. What was even more guilt-rendering was the need to separate some of the pages which had never been cut apart, obviously never before viewed by a human eye. These I separated gingerly with a very sharp blade, not sure that I had the right to do this.

The list of congress participants was truly a "who's who" of the day. A few familiar examples: Bowman, Wells, Jaeger, Knapp, Giraud-Teulon, Donders, Snellen, von Graefe, Schweigger, Hering, and Sturm. The very informally assembled report included discussions of the constitution and by-laws, the selection of future meeting sites, references to the banquet, toasts, and messages from absentees.

Just to visualize the possibility that Donders and Jaeger, or Snellen and von Graefe, or Bowman and Sturm might have been seen chatting together, or even joshing one-another, in the hotel lobby, or in the bar, or perhaps sharing a ride in a taxi, or going shopping together, gives a startling intimacy to history. The human and everyday nature of famous individuals can hardly be conveyed by the formidable references to them in textbooks or by reverently written obituaries. For some strange reason their identity as normal individuals is often more effectively accomplished in the mere appearance of their names in alphabetical order or geographical categories in a simple list of "persons in attendance."

Oh yes, and among the listed names of participants from "Hollande" was "Gillavry (MAC-), a Java." Could it be that he was the Mac-Gillavry who did his thesis work on accommodation and convergence at Utrecht, whose findings laid the groundwork for today's graphical analysis of optometric data? A reference to Mac-Gillavry's thesis may be found in the April 1970 issue of this Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 12.

#### Rubens and Christmas:

Year after year I receive a charmingly designed Christmas-New Year's card from Professor H. Schober of the Institut für medizinische Optik der Universität München which cleverly involves the theme of visual science in a subtle but tasteful way. This year's card was fronted by a soft-tone reproduction of a copperplate engraving of a Rubens (1613) painting captioned (in German) "Vision with one and with both eyes". In it a robed scientist is crouching, on one knee, to observe from the

edge of a large table along taut cords or wires extending from in front of his two eyes to a midline crossing point and also to two small circular, rather widely separated fixation targets on a vertical plane at the opposite edge of the table. The huge table legs are carved child-like winged cherubs. In addition two intensively alive cherubs are pointing out to the scientist where he should be looking, and a third has one hand on the scientist's shoulder, not unlike the old "coffee nerves" advertisement, trying to tell the scientist what he should see. Truly inspirational!

Peter Paul Rubens, 1577-1640, was a Flemish painter. Etchings of some of his more famous paintings were usually done by other contemporary artists.

#### Van Gogh had glaucoma?

Someone laid on my desk a recent (undated) newspaper clipping headlined "Eye Doctor Believes Artist Had Glaucoma" and captioned East Orange, N.J. (UPI)", in which Dr. Humbert M. Gambacorta is credited with saying that the paintings of Vincent Van Gogh indicate the great artist had glaucoma. Cited as evidence are the halos, or haziness, around Van Gogh's lights and his moons in canvases painted when Van Gogh was in his late thirties.

#### Kepler on light and vision:

KEPLER'S OPTICS: A STUDY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY NATURAL PHILOSOPHY is 596 pages of Ph.D. thesis by Stephen Mory Straker submitted to the History and Philosophy of Science faculty of Indiana University in November 1970. Johannes Kepler, an astronomer, contributed immensely to our understanding of the relation of light to vision.

Individually reproduced copies, bound in paper-back, may be ordered from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

#### A History of the Ophthalmoscope:

This is the title of a 1971 book by C. Wilbur Rucker, M.D., Whiting Printers & Stationers, Rochester, Minnesota (128 pp., clothbound, \$3.00). It is very readable and well documented.

It can be purchased directly from the author, whose address is Emeritus Room, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota 55901.

#### Leonardo da Vinci

Anything written about Leonardo (1452-1519) seems inherently to be beautiful. No exception to this is Leonardo and the Age of the Eye, by Peter Ritchie-Calder, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1970 (\$12.95). Chapter Three, "The Magnet of the Mind", pp. 43-69, deals extensively with Leonardo's concepts of the eye and sight. Disappointingly, this author, like almost every other writer, ignored Leonardo's marginal but nevertheless explicit description of the contact lens. The other chapters describe Leonardo's many other interests, and much about his

personality. Well illustrated and with frequent quotes, the book is difficult to put aside.

Reviewed elsewhere:

Goethe's Color Theory, arranged and edited by Rupprecht Matthaei, American edition translated and edited by Herb Aach, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, New York, 1970, pp. 275, 23 x 29 cm. \$27.50.

The History of Three-Color Photography, by E. J. Wall, Focal Press, London and New York, 1970, pp. x + 747, \$35.00.

Both of the above are reviewed in the March 1972 issue of the Journal of the Optical Society of America, Vol. 62, No. 3, p. 465.

Optometristas, Ole!

In response to our broadside request for information on memorialized optometrists Jose Vazquez Cervantes, Secretary Executive of the Asociacion de Opticos y Optometristas de la Republica Mexicana, A.C., reports that on December 11, 1971, his Association celebrated its 31st Anniversary in a gathering of 300 optometrists to present special awards of merit to their Past Presidents and other optometrists "who have done the most for . . . optometry in the country of Mexico", as follows: Nicolás Gómez Mayorga, Rubén Mazal, Alberto de la Mora Gómez, Jorge Salcedo Ortega, Frank J. Devlyn, Jr., Marcelo Chiquiar Arias, Victor Chiquiar Arias, and Jorge Taboada. All except the last two are past presidents.

Memorials to optometrists:

The Jose Sanchez Memorial Eye Clinic, previously the Monroe County (Florida) Lions Eye Clinic (Reference: Florida Optometric Association).

The Albert Fitch Memorial Library Fund, the Robert E. Decker Memorial Fund, and the Shay P. Millis Memorial Fund (Reference: Pennsylvania College of Optometry).

The George H. Giles Memorial Fund, and the Max Wiseman Memorial Fund (Reference: British Optical Association).

The Eugene W. Strawn Memorial Fund, and the Albert H. Rodriguez Memorial Auditorium (Reference: Illinois College of Optometry).

The Andress Jay Cross Memorial Prize (Reference: Omega Epsilon Phi fraternity, c/o Illinois College of Optometry).

The George A. Comstock Scholarship Foundation (Reference: Connecticut Optometric Society, Inc.).

The Dr. E. C. Nurock Optometric Research Library, and the Dr. Leslie Mintz Scholarship Foundation (Reference: New Jersey Optometric Association).

The Harry B. Squarebriggs Memorial Lectures (Reference: University of Waterloo School of Optometry, Canada).

The Roy A. Thorson Award (Reference: Optometric Association of the Philippines).

The Hermann Pistor Fachschule für Augenoptik (Reference: Fachschule für Augenoptik "Hermann Pistor", Jena, East Germany).

Memorials to friends of optometry:

The Frances E. Kolb Memorial Fund (Reference: Pennsylvania College of Optometry).

The William P. MacCracken, Jr., Memorial Library (Reference: Southern College of Optometry).

The Harry A. Jankiewicz Memorial Fund (Reference: University of Houston College of Optometry).

Puddled wrought iron frames:

An exhibition of old-time spectacles, including several genuine puddled wrought iron spectacle frames, in the Optical Section of Marshall Field & Company, Chicago, circa 1935, apparently prompted an article entitled, "Eyes of the World . . . Wrought Iron in Spectacle Making" in the Reading Puddle Ball, Vol. 4, No. 2, May 1935, pp. 1-5, a publication of the Reading Iron Co., Philadelphia. Quoted is the last, May 31, 1669, entry in the secret diary in which Samuel Pepys pathetically resigned himself to approaching blindness.

"Pepys' oculist, the famous Dr. Tuberville, absolutely forbade the use of the proper convex lenses, on the mistaken theory that they were 'too old' for Pepys' eyes!", wrote the unidentified author of the article.

Here are a few other quotes. "One pair of Chinese spectacles, still in existence, has lead frames which bring the weight up to twelve pounds!" "It was wrought iron, largely, which first made it possible for the man of modest income to have spectacles which, in length of life at least, matched those of his wealthier brethren." "Iron spectacles frames were in vogue in Benjamin Franklin's day." " . . . genuine puddled wrought iron in itself has a record of resistance to corrosion and vibration which no other ferrous metal can match."

Mrs. Elizabeth Egan, Indiana University Optometry Librarian, brought this to my attention.

Puddling, by the way, is a process of converting pig iron into wrought iron by subjecting it to heat and frequent stirring in a reverberatory furnace in the presence of oxidizing substances.

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H. W. Hofstetter, Editor