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Library

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Leeds presentation:

At the December 1988 OHS annual meeting in Columbus, Ohio, OHS member James Leeds gave a presentation on his years of book collecting. The following is a transcript of that talk.

Reminiscences of a Book Collector

Over 35 years ago an optometric friend told me of a 3-volume set of books he had by Oatman, published in 1920 and consisting of a text and 2 volumes of stereoscopic paintings in color of various fundus abnormalities. He considered it priceless. Then the subject changed, and I forgot about it.

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Shortly afterwards someone gave me a set and I was happy to have it. About that time the School of Optometry at Indiana University began its courses, and I asked the Dean, Henry Hofstetter, if he would like the Oatman set for the library. He was pleased to have it, and I remember a feeling of loss when he left with my Oatman set under his arm. (Incidentally, I have had a number of quotes on complete sets, the last one being in March 1988 for \$93.00, scarcely a priceless item, but it is still an intriguing piece of work.)

Not long afterward in the middle of the night I dreamed about books and book collecting. I couldn't return to sleep, and the idea of collecting books relating to the eye and optics was born then and there. Since then I have been an avid collector, and it has been a most engrossing hobby.

I mentioned my idea of collecting books to Dr. Hofstetter, and he encouraged me and wondered if I wanted my Oatman back. I told him I was sure I could find another set, which I indeed did. He said he'd send me a few books, and the seven or so books he sent started me on my way.

I advertised in various optometric and collectors journals and haunted every old bookstore I could find. (I rapidly found out the difference between a "second-hand" and an "antiquarian" bookseller. The latter charges several times or so more than the former for the

same title.) At first it was easy. I could use almost every title offered to me, and my collection grew rapidly. I was fortunate to meet George Giles, the Secretary of the British Optical Association from London, where there is a marvelous library and museum. (Incidentally any of you going to London should put it on your "must" list. It is fantastic.) He offered to send me some of his duplicates, and many of them are still among my prized volumes.

Initially I decided to collect English language books published prior to 1940, or World War II. I wasn't too fussy---anything remotely relating to the eye and optics---pathology, refraction, geometric optics, color vision, blindness, quackery, catalogs, iridiagnosis, reading, and so on. They were cheap, too. I rarely ever spent over \$5.00 on a book, and that had to be a real find. I wanted quantity as much as quality. I used to say I'd rather have 100 books at \$1.00 each than one gem for \$100.00. Now I get quotes of \$10.00 or more for the most common books. Probably the most common are: "Sight without Glasses" by Harold Peppard, a throw-away your glasses bible, and May's "Diseases of The Eye" which has had some 40 editions starting in 1901. They are literally worthless, but not in the hopes of the nice people who send me quotes. Probably the strangest quoter I ever had was an optometrist who sold me his books at \$2.00 per pound. I did a fine business with him, and that one was fun. I ended up paying him about what the books were then really worth.

Now I have over 3,200 volumes. No journals, just no room for them. My shelves are cluttered. I need another fifty feet of shelves but there are not walls on which to build them. I used to put my books in the vertical position in order for me to read the title. Now, if they are a larger size I put them with the titles on the top, so I can stuff in more books above them. With the passage of time I now collect more recent books, so the publication data is of no importance. I will also buy foreign language books if available, and I have 200 or so. German is the most prominent, but I also have some in French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Polish, Czech, Yugoslav, Russian, Arabic, and Japanese. At first I did not pay much attention to the edition number, but now I aim for the first and sometimes the last edition. Last year I was pleased to get May's first edition from 1901, although it probably isn't worth much. I remember it cost \$2.98. I will say that if on one of my forays I buy a book I already have, my day is ruined, regardless of the price, even \$1.00. I guess I was toilet trained too young.

I might mention a few odds and ends of interesting thoughts and acquisitions, none earth-shaking but things that sort of stood out. I have a number of books on outright quackery. Iridiagnosis is a study of the health of a person by charting his iris. A lot of books were written on the subject, and it is still being presented today. One book mentioned that people whose eyes are wide-set are honest and forthright and those whose eyes are close together are shifty and not to be trusted. Well, I have a wide pupillary distance and my wife's is narrow. I'll say no more about that. There was a book I was dying to get: "Midwives, Chiropodists, and Optometrists", a paper-back by Louis Reed, University of Chicago Press, 1932. It turned out to be a rather dull sociological study. On a New York trip I had gone back and forward across 4th Avenue for several hours and was tired. There was one last little bookstore across the street. I forced myself to go there and in the tiny medical section of 10 books or so was "Midwives, Chiropodists, and Optometrists" for \$1.00. That one made my day. Another made-day was when I was mailed "The Pigeon Eye" for \$2.00. I found out that racing pigeons are judged by eye color, a rather underwhelming fact for the uninitiated perhaps, but still I'm glad to have it. There are also several novels concerning the eye that I am pleased to own. They have rightful places on the shelves.

Most of my books are 20th Century, with about 500 or so in the 19th Century, and several in the 18th. Many are rare. That doesn't make them valuable, but I'm sure many are valuable, especially when I read the prices in current catalogs. While I will collect anything, I am more interested in the history of the eyecare professions and the pioneers who got us where we are today.

What has all this done for me? While I am certainly no smarter than anyone else, I probably have a deeper sense of where we came from and an awareness of our history. I read recently of some technique or other that was being propounded as new that I saw written up close to 100 years ago by one of our pioneers. There has been a certain amount of prestige in a very small group of people, and I will get occasional calls from strangers who want to know something or other. As you know, I am a past-president of the Optometric Historical Society and a past-chairman of the History Committee of the American Academy of Optometry. I take pride in instigating the written history of the Academy, which was published last year.

Many patients will look at my library and ask if I

have read all the books. The answer is of course no, but I have certainly looked at each one and listed it. For example, there must have been 50 books written between 1890 and 1910 entitled "Diseases of the Eye". Reading all of them would have been redundant. My collection is like Topsy: it just "grew". If I could have anticipated the end result, I would have kept better records in a card file instead of a hopelessly tattered and fragile ledger book. Normally I am very methodical, but this one got away from me.

I am asked if I have any specific "wants". The answer is anything I don't have, but they're getting harder to get. For one thing there are very few collectors, and there is no one to swap with. I can look back with regret at some of the things I should have acquired, but did not. I view with regret the passing of the old-time second-hand bookstore. The last time I was in New York City, I found only four. Thirty years ago there were 20 or so in a small area on 4th Avenue; now there are just two. Rents and real estate values simply got too high. The same thing is true elsewhere.

One doesn't have to be crazy to be a collector, but it helps. And with aggression comes some success. My former associate in practice used to comment how amazed he was when I would return from a fishing trip to the Canadian bush with a box of old books. And with success come a few failures. To list a few: "Color-Blind" was a sociological study of race relations. "Antique Glasses and Frames" was a beautiful book on 17th and 18th Century wall mirrors. "The Retina Manual" which I grabbed off a bookstore shelf without even opening it was about the Retina camera and its little sister, the Retinette. Three days were ruined on those purchases.

I have been asked if I am afraid of my collection being stolen. I suppose it could be, but I doubt it. Did you ever try to carry over 3,000 books?

Finally, what will happen to my collection? I really don't know. Now that I have attained the biblical three-score and ten I think about it. At the moment it is willed to Indiana University, but that could change. I would like the library to remain intact and be available to anyone who might want to use it. What will be, will be. I do know that it has been an important part of my life, and I feel I am a more complete person for having done this. That alone is enough for me, and I am pleased to have had the opportunity to have shared these thoughts with you.

James P. Leeds, O.D.

An appeal for help:

OHS member Eric P. Muth, Ph.D., 25 Parkland Place, Milford, Connecticut 06460, USA, is busily, very busily, working on "The History of Vision Aids." He also serves the Smithsonian and the National Museum of American History, the Medical Sciences Division, in an ophthalmic and optical advisory role. He has recruited help and suggestions from a variety of cooperating persons including some optometrists, ophthalmologists, opticians, optical manufacturers, librarians, and others, but interested persons tend to be few and far between, as we OHS members well know. Most difficult, he comments, is the getting of expert information from within the USA. Any leads of related patents would be especially welcome. His telephone number is (203) 874-4595.

Remembered history:

Celebrating his 100th birthday on November 4, 1988, Jack W. Ragsdale, O.D., of Brady, Texas, recalled that as a child he accompanied his father, P. C. Ragsdale, O.D., when he made his rounds in over 30 counties by horse and buggy to provide vision care. Jack reported that his father was a graduate of the Southwestern Optometry School in Kansas City, Missouri. Jack, in turn, graduated from the Los Angeles College of Ophthalmology and Optometry in 1913 and started practicing in 1914. He reported further that he holds Texas license number 32 (presumably dated 1921 when the law was enacted).

During his 57 years of practice, Jack held a variety of posts and offices, including membership in Masons and Rotary, in Brady, presently a town of about 6,000 people in central Texas, from which he received the city's highest honor. Now in retirement, he was made a birthday presentation of a certificate for 55 years of continuous membership in the Texas Optometric Association. The details and a photograph are in the December 1988 issue of Texas Optometry, Vol. 44, No. 12, pp. 1 and 3.

Approximavit sidera:

"He brought the stars nearer", is the Latin tribute on the tomb of Joseph von Fraunhofer (1787 - 1826) in Munich. He was born in Straubing, Germany, the eleventh and last child of a glazier. He was orphaned at age 12, apprenticed by his guardian immediately to a mirror maker and glass polisher in Munich for six years at no pay, and treated very badly by his master.

At age 14 the master's workshop-house suddenly collapsed, burying Joseph in the rubble from which rescuers barely rescued him, hurt but alive. Among the visitors at the rescue scene were the ruling Prince (later King) Maximilian (1756 - 1825) of Bavaria

and Joseph Utzschneider (1763 - 1840), a wealthy industrialist, both of whom kindly provided the boy with funds enabling him to train as an optician and acquire related books.

Advancing his skill and knowledge, Fraunhofer effectively changed the making of lenses from an art to a science. Because he lacked an academic degree he was ineligible for full membership in the Bavarian Academy of Science. In 1823 King Maximilian appointed him to a salaried professorship and in 1824 knighted him, making him "von Fraunhofer". The University of Erlangen awarded him a degree posthumously in 1828.

These and other personal details are provided by E. Scott Barr in a biographic article in the November 1988 issue of Optic News, Vol. 14, No. 11, pp. 14-17.

History in ceramics:

Among the charming gift suggestions available through the Deutsche Optikerzeitung (Postfach 104443, 6900 Heidelberg 1, West Germany) last November was a delftware wall plate 21 cm. in diameter, faintly bluish, depicting the classic Der Brillenmacher, the very touching scene being the front of a spectaclemaker's stall where a scholarly looking gentleman is trying to read a book with one pair of glasses while the spectaclemaker has in hand another trial pair. Visible in the background are a church, another building, and three pedestrians.

Only 200 plates were made and offered at the price of 98 German Marks.

Carl Zeiss commemorated:

In recognition of the 100th anniversary of the death of Carl Zeiss the Württemberg National Library at Stuttgart, West Germany, featured an exhibit of the history of vision aids from October 10 to December 23, 1988. Included were numerous items borrowed from the optical museum at Oberkochen.

The display featured early spectacles and related literature and artwork illustrating physiological knowledge of ocular function, physical research on the nature of light, and social factors affecting the development and use of eyeglasses from antiquity to the present. Supplementing the exhibit was an 88 page richly illustrated catalog by Dr. Annemarie Klotz available for 15 Deutsche Marks from the Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Postfach 105441, 7000 Stuttgart 10, West Germany.

A brief write-up appeared on page 50 of the November 20, 1988, issue of the Deutsche Optiker Zeitung, Vol. 43, No. 11, under the title, "Die Brille im Wandel der Zeit".

Two centuries of frame manufacturing:

A large two-page advertisement of L'Amy of France in the January 1989 issue of Eyecare Business, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 2-3, features the "cradle of framemaking" in the Vallee des Arcets above the town of Morez, France. There a farmer and nail-maker named Pierre-Hyacinthe Caseau applied the metals and equipment from his nail-making to fashion an eyeglass frame in 1796. The farm house still stands. The idea and craft spread mostly into cottage industries in the area. Another of the early artisans was Louis Felix Lamy who, by 1910, was selling his frames as far away as Italy. The fifth and sixth generations of Lamys still manage the L'Amy firm, the largest of more than 50 family businesses in Morez.

Shown in the advertisement is a 19th century machine for making curled-end temples presently in the Morez Eyewear Museum.

Morez, a town of about 6,000 population in eastern France, is the home of L'Ecole Nationale d'Optique.

Marly's new edition:

In a recently received promotional flier Pierre Marly announces a new edition of his book entitled "Spectacles and Eyeglasses", 2,000 copies in French at 300 French francs each, and 1,000 copies in English at 315 French francs, postpaid. The book is described as cloth-bound with a headband and gilt edge, 160 pages, 60 in color, and 450 illustrations including 135 in four colors. Upon request Marly will autograph your copy. Order directly from Pierre Marly, 25, rue Royale, 75008-Paris, France.

88 years of lighting:

In 1963 the Commission Internationale de l'Eclairage, abbreviated CIE, or translated International Commission on Illumination, published a history of its official existence of 50 years plus the 13 years of its predecessor, the Commission Internationale de Photometrie. Designated CIE-9, it was written by Dr. J. W. T. Walsh, a long time officer in the organization.

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of CIE Dr. A. M. Marsden wrote a supplementary history for the period 1963 - 1988. This appears in the September 1988 issue of the CIE Journal, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 16-30.

Augenoptik history:

The persistence and changes of the German Augenoptiker are traced from the Nurnberg guild of spectaclmakers in the 16th century to the present by Prof. Dr. Josef Reiner in an article entitled "Zur fachlichen Kompetenz der Augenoptiker" in the October 1988 issue of Deutsche Optiker Zeitung, Vol. 43, No. 10, pp. 37-41.

The earliest use of the title, "Augenoptiker", meaning ophthalmic optician, is credited to the Strasburger optician Gerhard Kloth just prior to World War I. In 1917 Kloth was appointed Director of the newly established Jena Augenoptic school and died only two years later. His successor Hermann Pistor continued to promote the use of the title for the next 32 years even though it met with considerable objection from philologists on tautological grounds, namely, the redundancy of the connotations of "augen" and "optik", both referring to the eye.

Reiner's review is mostly from the latter period to the present in which he describes the influence of handicraft philosophy, administrative regulation, legislation, the Augenoptik schools, court decisions, and international trends, including the recent therapeutic involvements in the United States.

Optometry in health care:

The trend to identify optometric practice closer to the health field is the historical theme of an article entitled "Optometry and its expanded role in health care delivery systems (1600 - 1987)" by Morton W. Silverman, O.D. in the January 1989 issue of the Journal of the American Optometric Association, Vol. 60, No. 1, pp. 52-55. Included in the review are matters of organization, publication, education, terminology, and litigation manifesting changes of professional mission.

The evil eye in England:

Recently stranded by a half-hour appointment delay in an office on the fourth floor of the university library I "cooled my heels" by nosing through the adjacent stacks which happened to be the folklore section. Off the shelf I pulled several very old volumes of a fascinating London journal entitled Notes and Queries and scanned their indices under such key words as eye, glasses, optics, spectacles, and vision. Volume 3 provided the charm, on page 133 of the February 22, 1851, issue, no. 69, as follows:

"The Evil Eye: This superstition is still prevalent in this neighborhood (Launceston). I have very recently been informed of the case of a young woman, in the village of

Lifton, who is lying hopelessly ill of consumption, which her neighbors attribute to her having been 'overlooked' (this is the local phrase by which they designate the baleful spell of the evil eye). An old woman in this town is supposed to have the power of 'ill wishing' or bewitching her neighbors and their cattle, and is looked on with much awe in consequence. H.G.T."

The easily overlooked(?) municipal borough of Launceston is in Cornwall County, the peninsular extension of England to the extreme southwest, and the village of Lifton is very near Launceston.

H.W H.

Spectacles in literature:

Most of us are familiar with the fact that much of our historical knowledge of the design of eyeglasses derives from early paintings and photographs. Similarly some of the symbolism, acceptance, and prevailing concepts of spectacles can be deduced from references to eyewear by novelists and other popular authors of any given era.

An example of such a resource in the latter category is *Les Misérables*, the classic of more than 1,200 pages by Victor Hugo (1802 - 1885) published in 1862 and so expressively translated into English from the French by Charles E. Wilbour. The action period represented in the novel is the early decades of the 19th century. The era and site were personally familiar to the author and described in great detail with meticulous historical intent. If it is assumed that successful novelists willingly use contemporarily familiar similes, metaphors, and other tropes, the following excerpts, perhaps the only ones in the book, provide some teasing insight into the popular concepts associated with spectacles more than 150 years ago.

On page 506, in description of a very hearty and hale nonagenarian of some social standing author Hugo adds "He wore glasses only when reading". On page 538, referring to a nosey aunt curious about the frequent absences of her nephew Marius, a very young man, Hugo comments, "She imagined some more or less illicit affair of the heart, a woman in the shadow, a rendezvous, a mystery, and she would not have been sorry to thrust her spectacles into it." On page 563, in describing the moral looseness and freestyle behavior rampant in certain other countries, a jabbering and somewhat inebriated young man in a pub, character Grantaire, says, "I add, as a completion, that I have seen an English girl dance with a crown of roses and blue spectacles." On page 733 the reader's attention is called to Father Mabeuf, an elderly and retiring scholar of diminishing means, with the comment, "M. Mabeuf

had begun to look through, reading by the way, with the help of his spectacles, two books which enchanted him, and in which he was even absorbed, a more serious thing at his age."

Enjoy your interpretations!

Artistic science:

In an article about dynamic stereoscopy by M. Sachsenweger in the November/December 1988 issue of Augenoptik, Vol. 105, No. 6, pp. 162-166, the early awareness of stereopsis is delightfully illustrated in a 1613 copperplate engraving by Peter Paul Rubens showing a scholar with one eye closed demonstrating his loss of depth perception by his failure to place his finger on a short rod being held a short distance in front of him by one of three putti (young Renaissance boys with wings).

More about Zeiss:

The hundredth anniversary of the death of Carl Friedrich Zeiss (1816 - 1888) is commemorated in a "Historisches" article by M. Jähne in the November/December 1988 issue of Augenoptik, Vol. 105, No. 6, pp. 183-185 plus illustrations on the inside front cover. In addition to an account of his life and career is a reproduction of a portrait of Zeiss at age 65 and of numerous postage stamps and postmarks issued in recognition of Zeiss and his contributions. The philatelic illustrations are from the private collection of the author, whose address is Dr. Med. J. Jähne, Chefarzt der Augenklinik, Bezirkskrankenhaus "Ernst Scheffler", Aue, Semmelweis - Siedlung 8, Schlema, DDR - 9408 (East Germany).

The serious jest:

The April 1988 issue of this newsletter, p. 26 of Vol. 19, had a commentary on the mysterious full-face mask appearing in a Korean journal. Dr. Charles Letocha responded with copies of two articles in the September 1957 issue of Zeiss Werkzeitschrift, Vol. 5, No. 25. The one on page 74 by Theodor Grossman is entitled, "The Spectacles on the Grotesque Helmet in the Tower of London." The other on pages 75-76 by Hans Reetz is entitled "Interpretations of a bespectacled Jester's Mask."

Grossman reports that the spectacles are part of a collection of gifts sent by the Emperor Maximilian I to Henry VIII. The Emperor had them made in his Court Armory in Innsbruck under the direction of the famous armor master Konrad Seusenhofer. They were delivered to Henry VIII in London in 1514 by Konrad's brother Hans Seusenhofer. The spectacles and the grotesque helmet are mentioned in 1660 in the inventory of the Tower collection according to which

the mask and spectacles were worn by Will Somers, court jester of Henry VIII. There is no evidence that the spectacle frame ever served to hold optically effective lenses.

The article by Reetz discusses the historical significance and symbolism of masks, helmets, spectacles, and court jesters. He comments, "The spectacles as an idea for the grotesque mask are like the dot on the i." Further on he adds, "All along they have been the symbol of intellectual activity, not only an optical aid but an attribute of the scholar and intellectual person. However when, as with our grotesque helmet, the spectacles appear in conjunction with the subhuman, the demoniacal and satanic (the horns!), the intellectual is dragged into the subhuman."

Incidentally, Dr. Letocha has a color slide of the grotesque mask with the rivet spectacles.

Einstein and "magnifying glasses":

In a letter reprinted from the Princeton Packet in the Winter 1984 issue of the News Bulletin of the Wills Eye Hospital Society, Henry Abrams, M.D., describes his delightfully friendly relationship with Professor Albert Einstein following his assumption of the role of family physician to the Einstein family in 1939. He comments, "To some extent, my discussions with Professor Einstein helped direct me to study Ophthalmology, which was more exact than general practice."

He comments further, "When I finished my yearly checkup of his eyes, I would tell him that his glasses could be improved 40 percent with a new prescription. His reply invariably, with a smile, would be, 'A friend in New York sends me these simple magnifying glasses as a gift each year, and if they do no real harm, Henry, I prefer not to change them. I don't want to hurt his feelings. You don't mind if I continue, do you'"

Attention to this anecdote was called by OHS member Charles Letocha. Would that we could complete the charm with information about the provider of the "magnifying glasses."

Oldest optometric journal?

Possibly the longest continuing serial publication in optics, primarily optometrically oriented, is Augenoptik, an East German journal started in 1880. The title varied from time to time, but it always included the generic term Optik. There was a three year interruption with World War II. The varying titles reflected primarily split-offs of other types of subject matter into new journals, but the optical nucleus retained the continuing volume numbering. The present title Augenoptik was adopted in 1964,

corresponding more precisely with the German concept of optometry.

In the January/February 1989 issue, Volume 109, No. 1, on the inside front cover is a commentary by editor V. Maxam on the journal trends during its 40 years under the present regime of the Deutschen Demokratischen Republik. He points out the increasing expansion of the contents of the journal to include several health-related involvements of the profession not unlike the trends in the western world.

To eliminate spectacles:

At the May 1988 meeting of the Ocular Heritage Society W. H. Marshall, M.D., presented a paper entitled "Spectacles Rendered Useless" in which he described "Sight restorers," "intensive ciliary exercisers," "Lax-optic pinhole glasses," "Eye Sharpeners," "Normalizers" and other devices, systems, regimens, and advices that have appeared on the market for those who have sought to eliminate the need for glasses. His presentation included forty slide pairs.

He informs us that copies of the original slides are on file at the Museum of Ophthalmology in San Francisco and that he would be pleased to provide copies at cost to ILAMO. His collection is on permanent display in his office at 716 East University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida 32601, telephone (904) 373-2099, and he would welcome visits from OHS members.

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