

APR 03 1996

HINDSIGHT

opt

OPTOMETRY LIBRARY

// Newsletter of the
Optometric Historical Society

Indiana University

243 North Lindbergh Boulevard, St. Louis, Missouri 63141, USA

MAR 13 1996

Volume 24

APRIL 1993

Number 2

Library

The AOA in the IOL:

Because I am a member of the historical committee of the IOOL (International Optometric and Optical League, originally IOL, International Optical League), a number of copies of interesting documents have come to me from several sources which delineate to some extent the early international involvement of the American Optometric Association.

Interestingly, the apparently official printed minutes of the July 3 & 4, 1928, founding meeting in Cologne, Germany, are in French, and a virtually verbatim German translation appears in the November 11, 1928, issue of Deutsche Optische Wochenschrift, vol. 14, no. 86, pp. 634-641. Both documents include photographs of all of the attenders and an appended paragraph stating that the expenditures were audited by Mr. C. Schmitt [Paris] and Professor Frederic A. Woll [New York City], and that the accounts were examined by both and found correct and were so certified by their signatures.

Presently there appears to be no English version of these minutes. That there originally was one is indicated by a footnote on page 190 of the 1929 Year Book of Optometry published by the New York State Optometric Association in which the editor states, "We have also received a stenographic report of the procedure at the Congress of Foundation of the International Optical League held at Cologne, Germany, July 3d, and 4th, 1928. But we could ill afford the space to reproduce it in the Year Book."

Inquiries to the American Optometric Association, the International Library, Archives, and Museum of Optometry, the Harold Kohn Vision Science Library at the State University of New York, and the New York State Optometric Association uncovered no copy. In the report of the July 23-27, 1928, AOA Congress in Grand Rapids, Michigan, published in the August 3, 1928, issue of The Optical Journal and Review, vol. 62, no. 5, pp. 25-26, is the following:

Frederic A. Woll, as delegate of the association to the recent meeting of the International Optical League in Cologne, Germany, gave a detailed description of the history and purpose of the league. He told of difficulties, due to differences in languages and customs, and the progress made in overcoming all obstacles. The refracting opticians comprise a large proportion of the membership and the organization is moving in the direction of promoting Optometric purposes.

Another meeting will be held next year in Paris, but the intention is thereafter to have meetings every two years.

Dr. Woll suggested that the organization donate \$50 as the American share in meeting the organization expenses of the last year and about 25 cents for each optometrist of the organization for expenses of the coming year. After the league meets preliminary expenses, he said, 10 or 15 cents for each optometrist of the organization will probably be a sufficient contribution.

E.E. Arrington, Rochester, spoke on the significance of the movement and said that it would prove, he hoped, a great step forward in making Optometry a worldwide profession.

The report went to the resolutions committee and later an appropriate resolution was adopted.

The detailed German and French versions of the 1928 IOL minutes show substantial participation by Professor Woll in the organizational discussion. Dr. Woll was not an optometrist. He was a member of the faculty of the College of the City of New York and taught hygiene and related courses in the optometry curriculum at Columbia University. He was also a prominent advisory resource in the evolution of optometry schools for accreditation purposes.

In a preface to the German minutes in the above-mentioned Deutsche Optische Wochenschrift editor Karl Radicke states that the concept of an IOL appeared as early as 1925 at a meeting in Leipzig, Germany. It seems reasonable to presume that major German optical conventions in Germany, then as now, would have attracted attenders from several neighboring countries and that issues of international significance would naturally come up for discussion, such as, for example, the 1924 Odin case in France. Quite evidently the prime mover in the IOL development was W. Lohmann of Berlin, who put forth his proposal quite formally at an international congress in Oxford, England, in 1927, and was authorized to submit organization papers and to initiate invitations internationally to attend a founding meeting in Cologne in 1928 as guests of the Hauptverbandes der Deutschen Optiker-Vereinigungen (Main Alliance of German Optical Associations).

In preparation Lohmann had mailed 127 letters of invitation and numerous thematic circulars and printed sheets in German, English, and French to associations and key persons on every continent. The 25 persons able to attend as official delegates from 11 responding organizations in eight countries were Dr. Woll from the AOA, 10 from four British organizations, four from France, one from Holland, two from Switzerland, two from Czechoslovakia, one from Hungary, and four from Germany. In his organizational report Mr. Lohmann pointed out that, in effect, the 25 delegates were representing altogether more than 12,000 members of their respective optical associations. Over half of this number were the

7,000 AOA members represented by Woll. In addition to the 25 delegates officially sponsored by their respective organizations, six opticians from five additional countries--Sweden, Latvia, Chile, Luxembourg, and Poland--attended as observers.

The major item on the agenda was the debating and adoption of a constitution and by-laws, which was accomplished at the beginning of the second day of sessions. Of interest is the adopted limitation of official membership to those countries in which opticians' associations were legally "registered," wherefore the official I.O.L. charter member countries were only England, France, U.S.A., Switzerland, Holland, and Germany.

What did Woll, the AOA delegate, contribute?

It is quite apparent that his comments carried much weight, not only because he personally was of relatively impressive academic stature, representing the largest membership constituency, and the only delegate from overseas, but also because the prior three decades of legislative enactments in America, our rapid change of professional title, and our advancement into institutions of higher education, must have fascinated the refracting opticians worldwide. So, for example, in his opening statement, the professor described the organizational segregation of American optics into such distinct groups as the Optical Society of America, the Guild of Dispensing Opticians, and the American Optometric Association. He pointed out the necessity for the IOL to define its refractive opticians role very clearly in order for the AOA to entertain membership, and that the issue would be on the AOA agenda at its forthcoming meeting later in the same month. He then described the professional role of the "optometrist" in terms of eye examining, refracting, ocular motility evaluation, and lens prescription application. Next he expressed the pledge of the AOA to be cooperative and helpful and displayed a gold-sealed letter authorizing him to represent the AOA as signed by its President and Secretary.

Later in the first day Woll delivered a gold-sealed invitation from AOA President Leo M. Mayer and Secretary Ernest Kiekenapp to meet next in the U.S.A. as guests of the AOA Congress.

Early on the second day Woll described American optometric relations with ophthalmologists and dispensing opticians, the state board examination and licensing system, and the impact of accreditation on the optometry schools. Near the close of the day he made an impassioned statement declaring this meeting spiritually the most gratifying in his 30-year career.

H.W H.

An installation historical:

When optometric association president-elects are inducted into the presidential chair it is rare that they use a bit of historical background to introduce their message. A delightful and informative exception was made by Linda Casser, O.D., when she was inducted into the presidency of the Indiana Optometric Association on April 5, 1992, in the presence of several hundred members and guests. The following paragraphs, accompanied by a few momentary slides for atmosphere, are the opening paragraphs which constituted almost two-thirds of her attention-holding acceptance speech.

On occasion colleagues have remarked to me that this will be the first year the IOA will have a woman president. The IOA actually had two female presidents earlier in this century, and I would like to take just a few minutes to introduce them to you. It will come as no surprise that help in gathering this information was the result of enthusiastic assistance from Dr. Henry Hofstetter as well as Barbara Sargent from the Health Professions Bureau. Written accounts of meetings published in early volumes of the Optical Journal and Review were extremely valuable resources.

The first woman president was Margaret J. Erisman from Lafayette, who graduated from the Chicago College of Optometry in 1900. She was elected nearly 80 years ago at the 18th annual winter meeting of the Indiana State Optical Society here in Indianapolis on January 6, 1913, before a meeting of 29 of her peers. It was a challenging legislative time for the Society, for the profession of optometry was literally being formed and legislatively defined from the ranks of skilled tradesmen. In 1907, the year of the first Indiana optometry act, Miss Erisman was serving as secretary of the Society. An amendment to that law in 1913 provided for the establishment of the optometry board.

To respond to these challenges, the Society, at its January meeting, decided to expand its legislative committee to include 3 members. In reading the proceedings, it was clear that the challenges faced and the commitments made by individual members were many:

"Mr. Woodard then asked the society to relieve him of his position as chairman of the permanent legislative committee, saying that he had been under a great deal of expense, and had fought almost single handed for a number of years to have certain legislative matters 'put through.' The members of the society, however, refused to listen to the idea of having Mr. Woodard resign from his position.

A motion was made and carried to the effect that \$200 be placed at once to the credit of Mr. Woodard, so

that he would be without handicap in his fight for a better optometry law."

In other proceedings a new constitution and bylaws were adopted, and the annual dues were raised from \$2.50 to \$3.00. Miss Clara Sweitzer of Richmond, later to become president herself, read a paper on "Women in the Optometry Field."

The summer, 1913, meeting under Miss Erisman's presidency took place in Elwood. In reading the accounts, this meeting seems to have been a rather intense combination of business and collegial social activity. After the reading of papers, attendees were treated to an auto tour of the local tin factory, glass plant, and hospital. The excitement, if not the organization, of this meeting emanates from published vignettes included in the minutes:

"Three autos wandered from the course taken by the others and the occupants came straggling into the glass factory just as the others were passing out."

The summer meeting was concluded by a banquet, hosted by local citizens. The evening's program included several musical selections as well as "A Few Remarks by Some Live Ones."

"The first among the 'live ones' to be called on was Miss Clara Sweitzer, Richmond. She responded in a pleasing manner. She was followed by J.L. Wolff, who was asked to tell why he took up the work of optometry. He told why in a humorous way that convulsed the audience."

Miss Erisman was re-elected for a second term in 1914. At the January, 1915, meeting, it was unanimously voted to change the group's name to the Indiana State Optometrical Society. At the same meeting, Miss Erisman "absolutely refused" to be renominated for president.

Miss Clara Sweitzer became the 13th president and the second female president of the Indiana Association of Optometrists in January, 1920. She was a 1907 graduate of the Rochester School of Optometry and past member of the Association's membership committee. The headline of the account of this meeting in The Optical Journal and Review read: "Indiana Optometrists in Session; Excellent Program of Papers; Prosperous Conditions." The Association had grown from approximately 30 in 1913 to 200 members state wide. The commitment to continue recruiting new members was strong, as the Association voted to bring Mrs. Emily Beatty, organizer of the AOA, to Indiana to secure new members.

Clara Sweitzer was re-elected president in Indianapolis in 1922, which marked the silver jubilee of the Indiana

Association of Optometrists. Written accounts describe this meeting as "by far the most successful that has ever been held by the organization." It was attended by both the secretary and president of the AOA as well as by Indiana's governor. 1922 also marked the silver jubilee of the AOA, which held its annual convention here in Indianapolis in June of that year.

Then, of course, in 1935 came that optometry practice act with which we are all familiar. It took 30 days to enact SB #43; it was viewed as a landmark optometry act throughout the country. The law was immediately challenged by a lawsuit to prevent the Optometry Board from enacting and enforcing the new act. This prompted the call for a special meeting of the Indiana Association of Optometrists here in Indianapolis in March of that year. The main purpose of the meeting, as you note from the photograph of the journal cover, was to decide which of the following courses should be followed by the Indiana Association of Optometrists:

1. Petition the Medical Board to take over Optometry
2. Abandon optometry to commercial interests, (referring to unregulated and unscrupulous business practices)
3. Defend and perpetuate optometry as a profession

Fortunately for us and for the citizens in Indiana, our forefathers were united in making the appropriate choice from among these options.

This 20-page document is a colorful compilation of recounts of the recent legislative success, as well as inspirational calls to action by Association officers and AOA leaders. It also includes a copy of the recently enacted law.

"If you wish to keep this splendid law which gives you a new status among your sister professions you must qualify for a Guard of Honor to protect it!"

The theme of the importance of association membership rings loud and strong throughout this issue:

"You men who have been shouting 'What has the Association done for me?'—we dare you to say that again."

"Forget your petty differences . . . and join the Association for the common good of all. Perhaps the very man towards whom you carry a petty grievance was there at the State House plugging away for you."

"With the successful enactment of the new law we hope we have forever silenced the old alibi that the 'Association has not done anything.' The Association has done something big and we are proud of it."

"You must go out into the highways and byways and bring in new members, explain the aim and the purpose of your association, educate them and teach them to see the truth as you see it. Where there are newly licensed optometrists you must see that they attend your meetings—give them a job—train them to carry on the work because it is only thru [sic] a strong organization united for a single purpose that we are going to be able to keep that which has just been won."

Dr. R.H. Scofield, third vice-president of the Indiana Association of Optometrists and chairman of the 1935 legislative committee wrote in this issue:

"The attorney of the AOA tells us that we have a model optometry law—but . . . there are many things to be done before we can write "finis" to this chapter of our story—in fact, personally I believe we have only begun."

How the eye sees:

If you have sometimes wondered about the correctness of Greek translators' interpretations of vision as rays emanating from rather than to the eye, do read the translation by Hofstetter and Stayskal entitled "Fourth Century Visual Science" in the January 1992 issue of Optometry and Vision Science, Vol. 69, No. 1, pp. 76-79. This is a translation of a summary of optics as formulated by Heliodorus of Larissa and his student Damianus in or before the fourth century A.D. and variously copied by scribes. The first printing was in 1523, in three languages, Greek, Latin, and Italian. The present translation appears to be the first in English.

Almost invariably:

With tongue in cheek Jack Runniger quotes from a late 19th century catalog from his great-grandfather-in-law's jewelry store offering "almost invariably . . . the right glasses" if the customer would simply answer a series of cleverly designed questions. From this little historic tidbit from within his own family connections Dr. Runniger as an editor of Optometric Economics makes a subtle editorial point in the February 1992 issue, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 5.

They told us so:

In a January 1913 article entitled "Dentistry and Optometry; a Parallel" by William H. Crisp, M.D. in The Ophthalmic Record vol. 22, no. 1, New Series, pp. 3-11, the prediction is made that unless drastic steps are taken in ophthalmological training, optometry will eventually include medical aspects of eyecare analogous to those already being assumed by dentists. Citing the fact the 27 states now have optometric licensing laws Dr. Crisp

quotes C.F. Prentice's recent change of opinion that, "I now unreservedly state my personal conviction that the public will receive the best eye service from practitioners who shall have in the future collegiately qualified in both optometry and medicine."

Dr. Crisp reminds us that it was Prentice who earlier had uttered the epigram that "a lens is not a pill" and had emphatically argued that "refraction could not be regarded as the practice of medicine." He further quotes Prentice as having said more recently "It is my belief that optometrists in this state will follow the policy of . . . later raising the standard of education so as to include a partial if not full knowledge of medicine among future practitioners." Supporting his concern, Dr. Crisp observes that to comply with the new laws optometry schools are expanding their curricula to two years, matching in length the training of many physicians still in practice. He predicts that the trend will continue and offers advice on how the field of medicine should cope with it, including the definition, identification, development, and certification of ophthalmology as a medical specialty.

In a letter of response to this article appearing in the February issue, of the same journal from H.B. Young (M.D.), pp. 111-112, exception is taken to Crisp's reference to the optometric threat as an argument for an ophthalmological degree or specialty certification. The writer agrees that "It can hardly be denied that the new title [ophthalmology] would be unsought if it was not to serve more or less as a counter attraction to the title 'Optometrist.' Nor is it easier to deny that the competition of the cult just named is the underlying cause of the new departure" He would prefer to see it advocated on its merits alone.

Editor:

Douglas K. Penisten
College of Optometry
Northeastern State University
Tahlequah, OK 74464
USA

Managing Editor:

David A. Goss
School of Optometry
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47405
USA

Contributing Editor:

Henry W Hofstetter
1050 Sassafras Circle
Bloomington, IN 47401
USA