NEWSLETTER
OF THE
OPTOMETRIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY
(7000 Chippewa Street, Saint Louis, Missouri, U. S. A. 63119)

Volume 2 October 1971 Number 4

Medieval perspectiva:

By far the most popular of all medieval treatises on optics, Perspectiva communis, by Fr. John Pecham (ca. 1235-1292, consecrated as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1279), became the standard elementary optical textbook of the late Middle Ages. Although the original composition took place between about 1270 and 1273, extant manuscript copies are variously dated in the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, truly a "best seller" (mercati maximi?). It appears to be largely a compendium of Alhazen's longer and more abstruse Perspectiva. The term perspectiva is the medieval Latin equivalent of our term "optics." Communis was used in titles of standard texts to imply "general" or "for everyone."

So says David C. Lindberg, translator, editor, and annotator of Perspectiva communis in his 1970 book entitled JOHN PECHAM AND THE SCIENCE OF OPTICS, University of Wisconsin Press. The Latin version is on the opposite odd-numbered pages.

Fascinatissimus!

Patron Saint of Opticians:

St. Jerome (331-420 A.D.) "held the chief place" among the several saints of the spectacle makers of France, according to author Edward C. Bull in an article entitled, "The Patron Saint of the Opticians" in The Optical Journal and Review of May 18, 1911, Vol. 27, No. 21, p. 1160. A Venetian optician in 1600 A.D. declared St. Jerome "The inventor of eyeglasses," surely a bit over-enthusiastically.

This bit of information was gleaned by someone in the A.O.A. Library and forwarded to me. On several occasions over the years my attention has been called to names of other patron saints of optics, vision, light, etc. Now I wish I had kept a log of these names, for a study of their roles could give us greater appreciation of our heritage.

Try this on your librarian:

"Sir David Brewster (1781 - 1868) and the Clinical Detection of Corneal Anomalies" is the title of an article by O.H.S. Member and V.P. Dr. John R. Levene on pages 105-109 of a publication having all of the following legend in its title page: XII^{e} CONGRES INTERNATIONAL D'HISTOIRE DES SCIENCES, Paris 1968, ACTES, Tome VIII, HISTOIRE DES SCIENCES NATURELLES ET DE LA BIOLOGIE, LIBRAIRIE SCIENTIFIQUE ET TECHNIQUE, ALBERT BLANCHARD, 9, rue de Medicis, Paris (6^{e}), 1971.

Whoosh!

Anyway, Sir David observed the corneal reflections of a candle to diagnose keratoconus, probably the earliest clinical method of examining conical cornea using a reflection method, concludes Dr. Levene.

A bit facetiously, I am prompted to wonder if the unsteadiness of the candle flame had anything to do with calling ophthalmometer lights "mires"!

Living history:

The opinions of 18 of the 21 living past presidents of the American Optometric Association are featured in the August 1971 issue of Optometric World, Vol. 58, No. 8, together with the inaugural address of the current President, Richard L. Hopping, O.D. Their abbreviated comments reflect the issues of 37 years, dating back to the administration of Walter I. Brown, O.D., in 1934. They identify the pressing problems of their respective administrations, optometry's gains this past decade, and the problems of the profession in the near future. Flavored by their personal and individual preoccupations and philosophy, their views nevertheless tell a very human story of the profession's recent struggles and aspirations.

Worthy of your library:

A historical survey entitled "The Nature of Light" by Vasco Ronchi and translated by V. Barocas makes delightful reading for visual science history buffs. Published by Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., London, in 1970, in attractive hard cover, it provides 288 pages of easy reading with eight color plates and 96 black and white plates. Chapter One deals with "Optics in the Graeco-Roman Age" and Chapter Eight, the last one, describes attempts to answer the question "What is Light?". Mathematical discussions are virtually absent, though visual and optical phenomena are well covered as manifestations of the behavior and character of light.

Buy it!

Conversation piece microscopes:

When I visited the optometry office of Peter Waterhouse in Cambridge, New Zealand, I was fascinated by a very old brass microscope which he had mounted on a shelf, purely as a conversation piece. A few days ago I saw a scribbled note tacked up on the bulletin board in a local (Bloomington, Indiana) lunch room offering "Old microscope for sale," with an address of a student rooming house. Just for fun I wandered over to the address and met with the student, who showed me a microscope of truly old vintage which he offered to sell for $75. Though I, personally, don't spend $75 on collectors' items, I suggested to him that it might be worth more. Together we went to the library and found a book entitled "The Billings Microscope Collection of the Medical Museum Armed Forces Institute of Pathology" published by the American Registry of Pathology, Washington, D.C., 1967. Therein we found his microscpe illustrated and identified as "probably of French origin, circa 1875."

I suggested that he advertise it in the AOA News or AMA News at $100.

Henry's Jumping Jack:

Recently my colleague Professor Merrill J. Allen gave me a copy of U.S. Patent No. 1,610,517 issued Dec. 14, 1926, to optometrist William J. Henry of Akron, Ohio, for a "System of Fitting Glasses and Appartus for Use in Practicing the Same". The appartus consisted essentially of a "jumping jack" whose very unstable posture on a pivot was controlled by the patient at the distance of 20 feet by means of a squeeze bulb attached to a long rubber hose. Compressing the bulb activated a pneumatic diaphragm which in turn hoisted the jumping jack. With practice and skill the patient could meet the challenge of making "Jack" sit up on the pivot. The patient's attention was so engrossed as to make his fixation almost absolutely fixed during retinoscopy.

It worked! I used it frequently while an optometry student at the Ohio State University in the late thirties.

Though I never met Dr. Henry, I once heard from a native of Akron, Ohio, that Dr. Henry had a huge Snellen chart painted on the side of a building a block or more away so that he could more closely approximate infinity.

I have forwarded my copy of the patent to the AOA Archives.

Frederic Albert Woll, Ph.D.:

From O.H.S. member Arthur Hoare I received a copy of a letter from the late Isidore S. Finkelstein to Dr. Hoare dated November 1, 1958, in which he pays glowing tribute to Dr. Woll as his former teacher both at the College of the City of New York and in the Department of Optometry at Columbia University. Dr. Hoare added that Dr. Finkelstein, a distinguished optometrist and teacher, was the son of a distinguished Rabbi in New York.

Dr. Hoare also enclosed a copy of his own address of dedication to Dr. Woll, dated March 1, 1955. Here are a few interesting extractions:

> "Thirty five years ago I first met Fred. He was conducting classes for optometrists in Los Angeles. The announced subjects were ocular anatomy and dissection, together with lectures on 'Hygiene the Optometrist Ought to Know.'"
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> "For twenty-five years or more Fred made a trip west during the summer college recess. During those years we shared the closest friendship with Ernest Hutchinson and William Kinney."
>
> "For ten years Fred spent his summer months in my home."
>
> "It was enlightening and enlivening to hear him tell of some of the practices of some of the early 'leaders' . . .to learn that there was much color and no little humor in the early scene."

"Through Fred I learned some intimate history concerning such men as Charles Prentice, Emil Arnold, Harry Covell, Ernest Eimer, John Eberhart, Ed Arrington, and Andrew Jay Cross, 'the Old Man.'"

Kentucky State College of Optometry:

On July 18, 1955, I wrote to a Dr. A. W. Tuttle of Winchester, Kentucky, whose listing in the Blue Book of Optometrists showed him to be a graduate of the Kentucky State College of Optometry. In a letter dated July 21, 1955, he reported having completed his study there in June 1939 and quoted from his diploma the words, ". . . having successfully completed the prescribed course. . ., has been by the authority of the State of Kentucky declared Doctor of Optometry." He suggested I contact Dr. W. D. Walden, Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, as the "school's founder and president during its period of operation." On July 25 I wrote to Dr. Tuttle and on August 17, 1955, he responded on Kentucky State College of Optometry letterhead as follows:

"The Kentucky State College of Optometry began in 1934, and ceased operation in 1945. The O.D. degree was granted to each graduate.

"The college records are packed and stored in a warehouse, if there is any specific data you would like I will try to find it for you."

On the letterhead were the imprinted names "William D. Walden, B.S., Opt.D., Sc.D., President" and "Henry L. Jones, A.B., A.M., Ph.D., Dean". Under the name of the college were the words "INCORPORATED" and "CHARTERED AND ACCREDITED". Enclosed were two unfilled transcript forms of rather conventional design but with the added information that, "By authority of the Commonwealth of Kentucky the following degrees may be conferred:" Then followed the degrees "O.D. DOCTOR OF OPTOMETRY," "B.S. BACHELOR OF SCIENCE", and "D.O.S. DOCTOR OF OPHTHALMIC SCIENCE", with explanations of the requirements of each, the last being described as an honorary degree.

I have forwarded this correspondence to the AOA Archives.

Early optometric research?

A very respectable amount of optometric research was done on accommodation and convergence in the American Expeditionary Force (A.E.F.) laboratories at Mineola, Long Island, New York, during and following World War I and published under the authorship of Drs. W. H. Wilmer and C. Berens. Someone, somewhere, a few years ago told me that there was an optometrist or two or three on the research staff. Now that I recall in the Wilmer and Berens papers the liberal use of such terms as near point of convergence, near point of accommodation, ductions, etc. it strikes me that of course there must have been optometrists around, doing their share.

The reference to the summarizing report is AVIATION MEDICINE IN THE A.E.F., War Department Document No. 1004, February 1920, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. Chapter VI, "DEPARTMENT OF OPHTHALMOLOGY: THE EYE IN AVIATION," pp. 165-240, was authored by Col. W. H. Wilmer and Maj. Conrad Berens, Jr.

Notes about Prentice:

A few years ago I had occasion to sort out a few notes about Charles F. Prentice in response to an inquiry from Hilda G. Kingslake for the History Committee of the Optical Society of America. Her inquiry was prompted by the fact that Prentice was a charter member of the Optical Society, in 1916, but resigned in 1924. In response I related the following bits of information from his book LEGALIZED OPTOMETRY AND MEMOIRS, Casparin Fletcher Press, Seattle, Washington, 1926, which strike me as much more interesting now than they seemed at the time:

Charles F. Prentice, M.E., born in Brooklyn, N.Y., June 24, 1854, the son of James Prentice, of London, England, a noted optician (optometrist) established in New York in 1842.

1875-1878, followed the profession of mechanical draftsman and patent solicitor.

1882, became father's partner.

1888, succeeded his father in business which he later transformed into a strictly professional practice.

1886, published a treatise entitled "Ophthalmic Lenses." Published many technical articles in ophthalmological journals.

1921, Ophthalmic Lenses and Prisms, Vol. X of the American Encyclopedia of Ophthalmology, Chicago, Ill.

Originated optical terms: prism-dioptry, contra-generic, dioptral, photostat, typoscope, chiasmal image, and contra-meniscus.

Honorary member of Optical Society of the State of New York, Rochester Optical Club, American Optical Association, British Columbia Optometric Association, Texas Optometric Association, and the Institute of Ophthalmic Opticians, London, England, 1925.

Member of first Board of Examiners in Optometry, State of New York, 1908.

1886, copyrighted term "opticist".

1870-1871, attended the Gymnasium at Lahr, Baden, Germany.

Autumn 1871 to May or June 1874, student at Royal Polytechnicum, Mechanical Engineering Department, at Karlsruhe, Baden, Germany.

1896, first President of the Optical Society of the State of New York.

Incidentally, he published only 200 copies of the book. It is surely optometry's number one collector's item, and, what is more, it may well be the most delightful reading any optometrist has every enjoyed. To use a "then" rather than a "now" phrase, it is simply a scream!

Memorialized optometrists:

Almost two years ago announcement was made by the Association of Ophthalmic Opticians, 11, Harrington Street, Dublin, Ireland, of the establishment of the Standish Mason Memorial Fund for a library to commemorate the late Standish Mason, a beloved teacher of Irish ophthalmic opticians.

This is a reminder that through the years many an admired contributor to optometric advancement has been memorialized by a special fund, the naming of a hall, a building, a collection, a society chapter, a publication, and even a redwood tree. What a rewarding hobby it would be for someone to gather information on such memorials! Any volunteers?

To get any such volunteer off to a good start we prepared a brief new release entitled, "WANTED: INFORMATION ABOUT MEMORIALIZED OPTOMETRISTS". The release was mailed to the editors of all of the state optometric journals and to about the same number of optometric journals outside of the U.S.A.

While we are awaiting responses from here and there, the following will serve as a start, or perhaps as additions to the Andrew Jay Cross Memorial Tree in Muir Woods mentioned in our April 1970 issue, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 14-15, the Emil Arnold Foundation (Reference: The Michigan Optometric Association), the Robert W. Tubesing Chapter of the American Academy of Optometry, The John Davey Memorial Fund (Reference: Indiana University Foundation, Bloomington, Indiana), and the Joseph Morris Babcock Memorial Archives (Reference: American Optometric Association).

From Jack Weber:

"Your idea for an optometric 'reminisce-in' sounds exciting and I would be delighted to attend such an event."

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H. W. Hofstetter, Editor