

NEWSLETTER
OF THE

OPTOMETRIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Volume 3

October 1972

Number 4

First reminisce-in a success:

Thirty members and friends of the Optometric Historical Society met in St. Louis on June 20 for a two-hour reminisce-in. Seventeen of those present gave brief but revealing and fascinating anecdotal accounts of generally unknown events and incidents in the history of optometry.

All of the remarks were taped for preservation in the A.O.A. Oral History Archives and in the Library of the Southern College of Optometry. These recordings are accessible to bona fide researchers of optometric history. Selected portions may be released for public use with appropriate authorization.

The breadth of interest in optometric history was reflected in the fact that the 30 participants came from 18 different states. Their ages ranged from approximately 20 to 80 years, with several from each decade. Eight of the participants were women.

First committees created:

Founded in 1969, the Optometric Historical Society this year reorganized some of the previous functions of its Officers and Trustees to share some of the increased functions and responsibilities with standing committees. The following society members have been notified of their appointment as committee chairmen and members for the current year:

A. Committee on Membership

(Chm) Maxwell Miller, O.D., 407 W. Market St., Pottsville, PA 17905
Raymond Myers, O.D., 7002 Nottingham, Apt. 108, St. Louis, MO 63119
Sol Tannebaum, O.D., 5 Plaza Medical Arts Bldg., Park Forest, IL 60466

B. Committee on Public and Professional Relations

(Chm) H. Ward Ewalt, O.D., 8002 Jenkins Arcade Bldg., Pittsburgh, PA 15221
Charles E. Seger, O.D., 1407 Garden St., San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
J. C. Tumblin, O.D., 5319 Broadway, N.E., Knoxville, TE 37918

C. Committee on Meetings (Including planning and direction of reminisce-ins)

(Chm) Spurgeon B. Eure, O.D., Southern College of Optometry, 1246
Madison Ave., Memphis, TN 38104
Earl J. Hunt, O.D., 226 Ohio St., Johnstown, PA 15902
Ernest H. Kiekenapp, O.D., 6800 Chapel Lane, Minneapolis, MN 55424

D. Committee on Nominations and Elections

(Chm) Mrs. Joseph M. (Lucille) Babcock, 3130 South Rochester Rd.,
Columbus, OH 43221

James R. Gregg, O.D., 5930 South Croft Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90056
Lester R. Hussey, O.D., Suite 222, Rookery Bldg., Spokane, WA 99201

Our treasury is growing:

As of August 31 our Secretary-Treasurer reported the total monetary assets of O.H.S. at \$603.84. Of this she has \$456.81 in a savings account collecting interest, \$115.03 in the checking account, and \$32.00 in petty cash. Our present annual income from membership dues is now approximately \$300.00. Our membership continues to grow, so that in a year or two we may have a treasury of close to \$1,000.00, as our expenses are quite nominal. Once we attain this level we can entertain some project activities. Our new committees may well be dreaming up projects already.

New members from Puerto Rico:

Luis Garcia-Margarida, O.D.
Box 9533
Santurce, Puerto Rico 00908

Ralph McConnie, O.D.
Concordia esquina Jobos
Ponce, Puerto Rico 00732

Paul Melendez, O.D.
San Esteban 1708
Urbanizacion San Ignacio
Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico 00927

Ramon Pacheco, O.D.
De Diego Avenue 365
Parada 22
Santurce, Puerto Rico 00909

These four new ones give Puerto Rico a total of five, a membership exceeded numerically by only the great states of New York and Pennsylvania, each with six members, and matched only by California. By any other criterion, e.g., per cent of population, per cent of optometrists, or even mileage, Puerto Rico's membership rating is absolutely number one.

Doesn't this suggest a charming site for our first O.H.S. assembly in, say, about 1975?

Add Belgium, France, and Italy:

A letter from Mr. Jean Thiriart, President of the Société d'Optométrie d'Europe (S.O.E.), and a check for one year's dues for six new members, adds the following new members to our role:

Jean Thiriart
52 avenue Louise
1050 Bruxelles, Belgium

Joseph Kerff
40 rue de la Montagne
Eupen, Belgium

Aime Kockelbergh, Ph.D.
22 Kardinaal Mercier plein
Sint Nikklaas, Belgium

Rudy Francioli
10 avenue de Lausanne
1800 Vevey, Switzerland

Ugo Frescura, F.A.A.O.
225 Corso Alfieri
14100 Asti, Italy

Gérard Roosen
Institut et Centre d'Optometrie
134 route de Chartres
F 91-440 Bures-sur-Yvette
France

Obviously Mr. Thiriart has been doing some proselyting, for which we are grateful. We hope we can sustain the interest of our overseas members and attract occasional contributions of historical information from them as well. After all, they are in an area where optometry had much of its early history, and where some fascinating optometric developments are presently unfolding. History, like science, has no political boundaries.

Immediately after sending us this letter Mr. Thiriart sent us a second one advising that he is contributing a bound volume of all of the 1971 issues of PHOTONS, the optometric journal of the S.O.E. This is just one more indication of the role of the O.H.S. in encouraging the truly international documentation of optometry's development.

Membership directory:

The next issue of the Newsletter will include an alphabetized O.H.S. membership list, with addresses. Listed will be all who have paid their dues for 1972. If your address has changed or is otherwise incorrectly entered in our records, please notify us.

Nordic Council of Opticians:

According to a translation, by Vigo H. Nielsen, of a speech delivered at the 25th anniversary meeting of the Nordic Council of Opticians by its president Svein Hommerstad published in Nordisk Tidsskrift for Optikere, No. 2, April 1972, pp. 23-24, the Council was founded in Johan Solberg Hansen's home in Bergen by Johan Thiele and Waldemar Friang of Denmark, Bror Biese and A. A. Kreander of Finland, Thorleif Viig and Alf H. Lie of Norway, and Stig Henning and Halvard Sjogren of Sweden.

The Council serves as "the focal point of the Scandinavian opticians/optometrists" and as a medium of communication and exchange between the optometrical/opticians of the four countries. "In 1963 the Council drew up ethical rules for the optical/optometric profession in Scandinavia. These are the first and still the only rules for the profession in the Western European Continent."

The Littlefield System:

Recently received from Lt. Col. Fred van Nus, O.D., U.S. Army, is a hardbound volume, approximately 7 3/4" x 11 1/2" x 1" entitled THE LITTLEFIELD SYSTEM OF EYE AND NERVE MEASUREMENTS. It appears to be a rebinding of an originally paper covered series entitled OPTOMETRY, copyrighted 1905 by Dr. J. E. Littlefield. Printed only on one side of each sheet, each page is labeled a "Lecture" and numbered from "Lecture No. 1" to "Lecture No. 101," even though

the text is continuous throughout. For example, Lecture No. 20 ends with the beginning of a new sentence, "The phoro-", hyphen included, and Lecture No. 21 starts with "meter showed four degrees of esophoria. . . ." Because this publication is identified throughout as a MAIL COURSE, one can guess that the subscriber received one lecture (page, sheet) at a time in the mail. Optometric suspense, indeed!

The inside title page shows a fine portrait of Dr. Littlefield and identifies him as "Graduate of five colleges. President of the Kansas School of Optics (Chartered). Organizer of the Kansas Association of Opticians. Secretary of the International Optical Association."

Intermingled with the 101 "lectures" are a number of full page anatomical charts and illustrations, some in color, but without pagination. Following the 101 "lectures" are several pages of questions called "quizzes," numbered from 1 to 323. An index follows, and then several pages of "Answers to Quizzes." Apparently one dedicated to give his money's worth, for the price of the course was \$50.00, Dr. Littlefield added an extra 19 pages of "Supplements" consisting of state board questions and answers. Some of these state board questions are identified as having their origin in Minnesota and Kansas, which is a bit puzzling, as Kansas did not have an optometry law in 1905. Perhaps the course extended over several years so that the Supplement came out after 1909. Or perhaps Kansas had a voluntary registration program prior to its law. These are pure conjectures on my part.

The text reads like a classroom lecture, replete with homely illustrations, witty phrasing, occasional exaggerations for emphasis, and frequent dogmatic assertions. An example, "Man is about eleven-tenths hog, on the question of stuffing." Another example, "People living on the shady side of a street are more subject to disease than those living on the sunny side." His informal style belies the fact that the coverage is really very comprehensive and the explanations are quite sophisticated.

On optometric pedigrees:

O.H.S. member Pacheco writes further to remind us that his computation of 133 "family years in optometric service" is based on the number of licensed professional life years, not total biological life years. Not content with this apparent, or at least so far unchallenged, world record, he smugly tells us that if he included two maternally connected first cousins and another to whom he himself is a first-cousin-once-removed, he could add another 76 professional life years, making a total of 209! In a year or two he and his living optometric relatives will total seven, so that they can score seven more professional life years in each calendar year. Says Tony, "We should exceed 400 years of Legal Optometric Life in three generations."

I do not predict that the Pacheco record can be beaten in the States, but I wonder if there might not be some well documented optical pedigrees in China. Perhaps O.H.S. member T. C. Chang in Hong Kong is already digging through some geneologies.

The last McAllister, O.D.:

"Everybody's dying off and I'm not getting new people," said John Wardale McAllister. "I don't suppose I'll be in business much longer."

With these simple, poignant words, the 78-year-old bachelor forecast the professional demise of five generations of McAllisters, one of the most distinguished and remarkable families in the American history of optometry.

So said feature writer Earl Arnett in the lead story on page B1 of the The Sun, Baltimore, Maryland, on August 9, 1972.

The five generations were named John, John Jr., William Young, Frank Wardale, and John Wardale, all bearing the surname McAllister. Pictures of all five are included in the article, a clipping of which was thoughtfully forwarded to us by O.H.S. member Lester Caplan, O.D.

More on Dr. Lubin:

Mention was made in our previous issue, page 31, of the involvement of Sigmund Lubin, a Philadelphia optometrist, in the production and showing of early motion pictures. Our O.H.S. Secretary-Treasurer has unearthed several more references to his contributions. One is an article entitled MOTION PICTURES, PHILADELPHIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO, by Joseph Jackson in the Encyclopedia of Philadelphia, Vol. 3, Harrisburg, (Pennsylvania), National Historical Association, C 1932, pp. 904-907. Another is an article entitled "Philadelphia and the Genesis of the Motion Picture" by M. J. McCosker of the Atwater Kent Museum in the Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography, Vol. 65, No. 4, Oct. 1941, pp. 401-419. More than two full pages of this article deal with the man, his activities, and even his personality. The third is a letter from the Corresponding Secretary of the (Pennsylvania) State Board of Optometrical Examiners with a photocopy of Lubin's application for optometric licensure dated 1917. Dr. Lubin gave 21 South 8th Street, Philadelphia, as his address, his birthplace as Berlin, Germany, and his date of birth April 20, 1854. He reported having been in the practice of optometry 45 years, 40 in Pennsylvania. During the two years prior he personally examined and fitted only "about two hundred" cases with glasses because he had "been giving great attention to my new invention of cameras, projecting machine, and many others." His instruments were "Test box and ophthalmometer."

His last listing was in the 1922 Blue Book of Optometrists.

Before 1300 A.D.:

"Preoptometry" is what Abraham Bromberg calls the period which we of European indoctrination ordinarily think of as pre-Renaissance. He describes it in an article entitled AZTEC AND MAYA PUBLIC HEALTH AND PREOPTOMETRY IN MEXICO in the July 1972 issue, Vol. 49, No. 7, of the American Journal of Optometry and Archives of American Academy of Optometry, (this has to be history's bulkiest journal title!), pp. 603-606.

"The Aztecs knew and used transparent materials like glass but it was not used to correct eye defects. Instead different herbs and other 'curative' materials were used."

"For the Mayans it was considered attractive to have a convergent stabismus."

An optical millenary:

Alhazen (965-1039 A.D.), known in the East as Ibn al-Haitham, was a Muslim physicist, astronomer, mathematician, and physician. His greatest work, The Kitabul Manazir, on optics, contained the first correct exposition of the theory of vision. Known throughout the world as the Father of Optics he has also been called the Father of Physiological and Geometrical Optics.

To celebrate the 100 anniversary of Ibn al-Haitham the Hamdard National Foundation, Pakistan, sponsored a seminar from November 1 through November 10, 1969 in five cities, for which national and international scholars and scientists were requested to make available articles on Ibn al-Haitham and other Muslim scientists. The more than 50 contributions, all in English, have been published in a single 350 page volume under the title IBN AL-HAITHAM, edited by Hakim Mohammed Said, published by the Hamdard Academy, and printed by The Times Press, Sadar, Karachi, Pakistan (\$10.40). The book includes numerous translations of Arabic treatises by Ibn al-Haitham.

This is a truly remarkable assemblage of personal and scientific details and interpretations of Alhazen's life and works. What is more, it makes delightful reading.

First registered optometrist:

In a recent letter Leo A. Meyer, O.D., advised that according to the original minutes of the Minnesota Board of Optometry the first group of optometrists, 65 of them, were licensed at the second meeting of the board on June 11, 1901. The first name on the list was that of Joseph W. Grainger, Rochester, Minnesota, "the first president of the Board of Optometry".

Just as almost every historical "fact" lends itself to a bit of challenge, however, so does this one. In the July 1901 issue of The Optical Journal, Vol. 8, No. 7, pp. 608-609, is a letter from the Minnesota Board dated May 28, 1901, stating, "The Board of Optometry have only had one meeting so far, on which occasion they elected officers for one year, as follows: Alex Sveningsen, of Moorehead, President; . . .". According to the letter, registration had not yet been accomplished. Could it be that Sveningsen resigned almost immediately in deference to Grainger?

That Grainger was a person of considerable prominence is suggested by a write-up of him in the June 1901 issue of The Optical Journal, Vol. 8, No. 6, p. 536. He was born in Yorkshire, England, and his father was in the spectacle business. He came to America in 1868. In

1890 the mayor of Rochester, Minnesota, presented him with a certificate of qualified optician. He took a course at the "Northern Illinois College of Ophthalmology and Otology, graduated Doctor of Optics". Later the same school gave him the degree of "Bachelor of Ophthalmology."

W. Rentzsch heard from:

In the July issue, p. 29, I reported that I hoped to make contact with the Viennese author of the visual science chronology. I was successful. Mr. Werner Rentzsch turns to be a graduate of the Jena optometry school where he studied under Prof. Dr. Hermann Pistor in 1934-36. He credits Dr. Pistor with sparking his early interest in the history of visual science. Since his student days he has continued his reading and writing in visual science history as a hobby. Perhaps a bit whimsically he commented (translated from German), "Historical articles are not printed in our optical journals with great enthusiasm, understandably because few of their readers are interested."

Incidentally, the author's address is Herr W. Rentzsch, Währingerstr. 127, A-1180, Wien, (Austria).

Venezuelan optometry:

A letter from Antonio Barcelo of Caracas, Venezuela, dated 24-9-71, arrived in mid-July 1972 in response to our broadside news release of August 24, 1971, to editors of optometric journals almost everywhere requesting information and leads on the names of optometrists who have been memorialized in one or another formal manner. Managing Editor Barcelo apparently had no memorials to report, but he listed 13, including six deceased, as "Names of members who deserve to be memorialized by their colleagues as pioneers of the Optometric Profession in Venezuela."

The letterhead reads "Colegio de Optometristas de Venezuela" and the organization's coat-of-arms shows the date "21 DE MAYO DE 1949", presumably the date of founding. The address is Apartado del Este No. 10.613-Sabana Grande, Caracas, Venezuela.

We also received a copy of their first edition of Refraccion, 1951, several 1966, 1967, 1969, and 1971 issues of El Optometrista and a copy of "Apuntes Sobre Optometria" by Amador Briceno Belisario. These have been placed in the American Optometric Association Library.

Having reported next to nothing about Venezuelan optometry in 1948 in my book OPTOMETRY, I checked my Venezuela folder for bits of information accumulated since then. There I found the quotation, "While optometry here is not an organized profession, there are optometrists in Caracas eager for the profession to occupy its proper place," from a letter from F. H. Lytton-Joseph of Venezuela published in the Optometric Extension Program News, Vol. 12, No. 10, June 1949, p. 1, under the caption "Venezuela Is Now Represented in OEP."

In the August 1, 1949, issue of the Optical Journal and Review of Optometry, Vol. 86, No. 15, p. 57, appeared a three paragraph comment

on the establishment of the "Venezuela Optometric Association" by "its 40 practitioners". "Until March 28, 1949, membership was open to anyone who had completed an optometric course in any other part of the world." The information was supplied by Dr. Alberto Behrens Belisario (now deceased), who also reported that his uncle Manuel Behrens B. established the first optometric practice in Caracas.

In the September 1, 1955 issue of the same journal, Vol. 92, No. 17, p. 36, appeared a report of approximately 200 optometrists in Venezuela, 60 of them in Caracas.

In 1957 Julio Moros G. of Caracas sent me a copy of the bill that was to be introduced before the Congress of the Republic to obtain legal recognition of optometry and to establish a School of Optometry in the Universidad Central de Venezuela.

In March, 1972, appeared the announcement "NEW SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY IN VENEZUELA" in the American Journal of Optometry and Archives of American Academy of Optometry, Vol. 49, No. 3, p. 266.

This chronology reminds me that someone once said that the normal time between the conception and the establishment of an optometry school is rarely less than a decade.

Unconscionable puffs:

Last year one of my students, Timothy A. Feehan, undertook to learn what visual care services, if any, were offered in his home town of Martinsville, Indiana, a hundred years earlier when it had a population of about 1,200 in a county with a total population of about 18,000. To this end he perused the microfilm copies of the 1871 Morgan County Republican (Vol. 1, No. 20 to Vol. 2, No. 19) at the offices of the Martinsville Daily Reporter. He also consulted the Peoples's Guide, A Business, Political and Religious Directory of Morgan County, edited by Cline and McHaffie, Indianapolis Printing and Publishing House, Indianapolis, 1874.

The Directory netted no information at all, but the newspaper advertisements included "A. BEATTY, M.D., OCULIST AND AURIST" with the assurance that "He respectfully offers his services in the general practice of medicine. He devotes his attention to diseases of the Eye and Ear and all Chronic diseases, particularly those peculiar to Females. For testimonials he refers to his posted cards." Also throughout the year appeared the advertisement of A. R. Chase, a "veteran tinner" who traded in copper, stoves, lightning rods, coal oil and spectacles. His spectacles advertisements read, "George Staples' celebrated spectacles, Gold, Silver, or steel rimmed, at Chases' . . . These spectacles are acknowledged to be the best in the world. They are the same as the Moses spectacles of Indianapolis, and they will be sold at 25 per cent lower than Indianapolis prices." The Martinsville newspaper also included advertisements of Indianapolis jewelry stores which included "spectacles" with their stock of watches, diamonds cutters, and clocks. Indianapolis is 30 miles north of Martinsville.

A Chicago mail order service at "43 S. Illinois St., south of Palmer House" advertised, "Spectacles, Magnifiers, Opera and Spy Glasses and Microscopes at the LOWEST PRICES. All kinds of repairing done to order. Persons living at a distance may forward Spectacles for repairs by Mail or Express. Send number of glass you use and receive Spectacles by return Mail".

In a February issue appeared a news item (paid?) announcing that "Dr. Boyd of Indianapolis will be in Martinsville on Tuesday and Wednesday, the 14th and 15th of February, where he can be consulted by those who are afflicted with chronic diseases, especially diseases of the eye and ear." The article quoted the Sentinel (Indianapolis) as having witnessed at least one of his miraculous cures.

The result of his Martinsville visit? Here is the newspaper account which appeared in the next week's issue: "Dr. J. T. Boyd, an eminent physician, according to his own representations, which we have no authority for denying, paid our town a visit one day last week, but because he was not met and welcomed by crowds of the afflicted with well filled purses and open palms, and because the local papers charged living rates for unconscionable puffs he was filled with disgust, stigmatized our city as a backwoods town, and returned to Indianapolis on the next train."

(The phrases "living rates" and "unconscionable puffs" puzzle me, too, but I am enjoying my guesses -- H.W.H.)

Where is it now?

The following is a copy of a typed memorandum, dated "Sept. 1947" in a longhand annotation, recently sent to me by Robert E. Bannon, who is now at American Optical, Buffalo, N.Y.

"Columbia University has received from the Dartmouth Eye Institute, Hanover, New Hampshire, a valuable gift consisting of the bibliography section of the Institute's library. This work, begun in 1929 under the direction of Adelbert Ames, Jr., consists of three main items.

"One part consists of a 50,000 card index file of important papers in the field of physiological optics appearing during the past twenty years in the regularly obtainable ophthalmological, optometrical, optical, and psychological journals published in this country and abroad. Although abstracts are not included on the cards, copious cross-indexing according to authors and numerous subject matters were made.

"The second part consists of a file of several hundred reprints received from various authors during the past twenty years by the Dartmouth Eye Institute. The material covered is related primarily to investigations in the field of binocular vision since the work of the Dartmouth Eye Institute concerned itself with research in that field.

"The third and most valuable part is about 300 translations of important German publications relating to binocular vision, space

perception, refraction, visual acuity, and allied subjects in physiological optics. The translations include standard works by A. Tschermak, F. B. Hofmann, Panum, Hillebrand, etc.

"The gift of the Dartmouth bibliography files to Columbia University was made possible by the intercession of Clifford L. Treleaven, Associate Professor of Optometry at Columbia, who was familiar with the material, and also Robert E. Bannon, formerly of the Dartmouth Eye Institute staff and now a member of the Optometry faculty at Columbia. The Dartmouth Eye Institute, affiliated with the Dartmouth Medical School and supported largely by the Rockefeller Foundation, carried out many important investigations in the field of physiological optics during the past twenty years but was forced to terminate its work in June 1947 because of lack of funds.

"The Dartmouth bibliography material now at Columbia in the General Science Section of the Low Memorial Library should be of interest and service to ophthalmologists, optometrists, physicists, psychologists, artists, optical engineers, and other scientists interested in physiological optics."

Dr. Bannon suggests that this collection may now be at the Optometric Center of New York, or that a complete set may also be at the Baker Library at Dartmouth, or at the Dartmouth Medical School Library.

The first Panoptic?

A recent visitor was Mrs. Ruth Hammon Sheppard, daughter of James H. Hammon, O.D., (1876-1944), about whom I wrote a few paragraphs in the April issue, p. 14. She showed us an old (1918) six page legal document headed, "UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT, DISTRICT OF INDIANA, KRYPTOK COMPANY, Plaintiff, -against- HAMMON OPTICAL MACHINE MANUFACTURING COMPANY and JAMES H. HAMMON, Defendants, In Equity No. 254." According to the document a prior document designated "Answers to Interrogatories of Plaintiff" filed by defendant Hammon "on or about the 25th day of October, 1918" was "ORDERED" to be "treated and considered as a bill of particulars filed by defendants in compliance [about three words obliterated] of plaintiff."

The rest of the six page document lists the interrogatories but not the answers. The interrogatories, however, are specific requests for various types of evidence such as "any original bifocal lenses embodying the invention of the patent in suit, which the defendant . . . claims to have made prior to January 23, 1904" and "whether or not there was a sale or public use of bifocal lenses embodying the convention of the patent in suit, more than two years prior to January 23, 1904."

* * * * *

H. W. Hofstetter, Editor