

MAY 19 1975

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

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

Volume 6

April 1975

Number 2

1975 O.H.S. Officers:

John R. Levene, D.Phil., Professor of Optometry at Indiana University, was elected President of the Optometric Historical Society for the year 1975. He is a charter member of the society, a member of the Executive Board, and had served as Vice President since its founding in 1969.

Newly elected as Vice President is Henry A. Knoll, Ph.D., Senior Scientist, Bausch & Lomb Co., Rochester, New York. Dr. Knoll is a charter member of the society and is also the most recently elected member of the Executive Board for a five year term.

Mrs. Maria Dablemont, Librarian/Archivist of the International Library, Archives, and Museum of Optometry, was re-elected Secretary-Treasurer for the sixth consecutive year. She is also a charter member and a member of the Executive Board.

James R. Gregg, O.D., and Sol Tannebaum, O.D. are the other two members of the five-person Executive Board.

Dr. Henry Hofstetter, Rudy Professor of Optometry at Indiana University, has been re-appointed Editor of the quarterly Newsletter of the Optometric Historical Society, which is now in its sixth year of publication. Dr. Hofstetter, a founding member, was President and a member of the Executive Board during the first five years of the society's existence.

President John writes editor, me:

"Dear Henry:

"For historical purposes, you may wish to know that this will be my first communiqué as President of the Society. It has a twofold purpose namely, a thank you followed by a request.

"I am sure that I speak for all the members of the Society in expressing sincerest thanks to you for editing the Newsletter. An editor's work is never easy, and is frequently tedious. Yet when reading the Newsletter one is struck by the overall tenure of pleasure, perhaps joyfulness is not too strong a word that pervades each issue that appears to emanate from the editor's pen. I am perhaps putting it rather clumsily, but I believe you know what I mean. The Newsletter never reads as though it had been a chore to edit or to write. I would like you to continue as editor, certainly for the coming year and unless I hear to the contrary from any member, please consider yourself appointed! I can appreciate that you have a sabbatical coming up and will be happy to stand in for the October issue.

"I suspect that any use of the term communiqué has a certain too official ring about it, for what is really a simple letter. However, you must also appreciate that for the first month at least, I do not wear my Presidential title lightly, and should be forgiven, temporarily, for literary grandeur or pedantry.

"Once again, thank you for having been editor, and I look forward to seeing many more years of editorship from you.

"Yours,

(signed)

"John Levene"

Gifts to O.H.S. are deductible:

In a letter from the District Director of Internal Revenue Service dated February 26, 1975, we are informed that donors may deduct contributions to the Optometric Historical Society for tax benefit purposes as provided in section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code.

As previously reported in this Newsletter, the Optometric Historical Society is incorporated as a not-for-profit society. Application for tax exempt status was filed several months ago with the assistance of Albert M. Katz, C.P.A., and Thomas E. Eichhorst, J.D., who not only did the complex paper work but also checked every legal and accounting operation to assure our compliance.

What does this mean? Certainly we do not propose to compete with other meritorious optometrically-oriented foundations for bequests, legacies, and gifts. On the other hand, the Society should be a natural medium to handle donations clearly intended to support projects having primarily historical significance. For example, a substantial gift, legacy, or bequest to underwrite the cost of publishing a thousand copies of a fine historical document would be a tremendous stimulus to enlist greater interest in our heritage.

So, if you, or someone you know, could be interested in providing for a fine historical project in a will or by means of an outright endowment, remember that the Optometric Historical Society is a logical and tax-exempt recipient for this purpose.

Arthur F. Dittmer (1900-1939):

"Thars a Gold Mine of History in the Ole Patent Office" is O.H.S. Vice President Henry Knoll's introduction to the following comments in a recent letter.

"For 100 years the main plant of Bausch & Lomb, Inc. has been located on St. Paul Street in Rochester, New York. Recently a decision was made to vacate the old buildings and move to a new location in the same city.

During the process of sorting and packing in preparation for moving, several trial sets of scleral contact lenses came to light. The lenses, consisting of a glass optical portion and a plastic scleral flange, were made just prior to World War II. For a number of reasons, including defense projects, the contact lens program was shelved. One of the people associated with this project was Arthur F. Dittmer, Ph.D.

"A man whose professional activities brought him in association with Dr. Leonard T. Troland, Dr. Paul Boeder, Mr. Fred W. Jobe, and Dr. William Feinbloom, deserves mention in the archives of optometric history. His obituary written by Fred W. Jobe appeared in the Journal of the Optical Society of America, Volume 30, Page 319, 1940.

"Dr. Dittmer was born in Ludington, Michigan, August 11, 1900. He was graduated from the University of Michigan in 1923 with an A.B. degree and received his Doctorate degree from Princeton in 1926.

"Following his graduation, Dr. Dittmer was a research physicist at Nela Research Laboratories in Cleveland, working on the characteristics of mercury arcs. After leaving Cleveland he served for a year as instructor at the Ohio State University and then became connected with the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation in Boston. Leaving Technicolor, Dr. Dittmer joined the staff of the Dartmouth Medical School where he was actively engaged in the development of the Ikonik lens. In 1936 he became a member of the Scientific Bureau of the Bausch & Lomb Optical Co. where he worked on the development of contact lenses. In 1938 he left Bausch & Lomb to continue the same work with Optical Research Inc. of New York City.

"During his association with the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, Dr. Dittmer worked with Dr. L.T. Troland. When Dr. Paul Boeder joined the Dartmouth Eye Institute, he worked briefly with Dr. Dittmer and carried on his work after Dr. Dittmer's departure. His association with Mr. Jobe coincided with his employment at Bausch & Lomb. His brief tenure with Optical Research, Inc. of New York City brought him into a close working relationship with Dr. William Feinbloom.

"In my conversations with Paul Boeder, Fred Jobe, and Bill Feinbloom, I was told that Dr. Dittmer was a brilliant man. He was further characterized as being independent and intense. Unfortunately, the only published results of his labors are nine U.S. patents. The first patent, which relates to the design of iseikonic spectacles, was assigned to the Dartmouth Eye Institute. The remaining eight patents were assigned to the Bausch & Lomb Optical Company. Four of these patents were concerned with the design of otoscopes. One relates to the design of an acuity projector and the last one describes the design and construction of a spectacle mounted Galilean telescope. This was marketed by Bausch & Lomb, Inc. for a number of years as the Cataract Minifying Lens.

"One of the contact lenses patents involved the design of direct and indirect contact lens Galilean optical systems for the correction of magnification differences in cases of monocular aphakia. This approach has recently been described in several papers by Dr. Jay Enoch.

"For those who are interested, I also located two obituaries for Dr. Troland: Journal of the Optical Society of America, 22, 509-511, 1932, portrait included, and American Journal of Optometry, 9, 425, 1932."

Thanks, Dr. Knoll, for calling our attention to two brilliant young gentlemen who made very significant contributions to optometric science and technology, and who, had they attained normal life spans, would unquestionably have become very familiar personalities among most of us living today.

### Sight restoring, 1865:

O.H.S. Executive Committee member James Gregg received a photocopy of page 655 of the Oct. 14, 1865, issue of Harper's Weekly, Vol. 9, No. 459, from Dale D. Freeberg, O.D., 4445 West Broadway, Hawthorne, California 90250. Dale inherited the Civil War, 1861-1865, issues of the serial collected by his great grandfather.

An advertisement on the cited page illustrates a simple looking tool which seems to consist of a knob handle at one end of an approximately cylindrical stem, at the opposite end of which is a concave surface which, presumably, one can press against the cornea. The legend, some in bold type reads, "RESTORE YOUR SIGHT. USE DR. J. STEPHENS & CO.'s PATENT CORNEA RESTORERS . . . . They will Restore Impaired Sight, and Preserve it to the latest Period of Life. SPECTACLES RENDERED USELESS.

"The most eminent Physicians, Oculists, Divines, and the most prominent men of our country, recommend the use of the CORNEA RESTORERS for Presbyopia, or Far or Long-Sightedness, or every person who wears spectacles from old age: Dimness of Vision, or Blurring; Overworked Eyes; Asthenopia, or Weak Eyes; Epiphora, or Watery Eyes; Pain in the Eyeball; Amaurosis, or Obscurity of Vision; Photophobia, or Intolerance of Sight; Weakness of the Retina and Optic Nerve; Myodesopia, or Specks or Moving Bodies before the Eyes; Ophthalmia, or Inflammation of the Eye and Eyelids; Cataract Eyes; Hemiopia, or Partial Blindness; Sinking of the Eyeball; Strabismus, or Squinting, &c.

"They can be used by any one with a certainty of success, and without the least fear of injury to the Eye. More than 5000 certificates of cures are exhibited at our office. Cure guaranteed in every case when applied according to the directions inclosed in each box, or the money will be refunded. Write for a Circular -- sent gratis. Address

"DR. J. STEPHENS & CO., Oculists, No. 74 John Street, New York

"P.S. - DR. J. STEPHENS & CO. have invented and patented a MYOPIA, or CORNEA FLATTENER, for the cure of Near Sightedness, which has proven a great success. Write for a Circular."

Commented Dr. Freeberg, "Maybe they had ortho-keratology 109 years ago!"

100 years before television:

On the same page of the above-cited Harper's Weekly is another interesting advertisement, by a New York manufacturer of photographic materials. Offered at both "WHOLESALE AND RETAIL" are "Stereoscopes and Stereoscopic Views. Of these we have an immense assortment, including VIEWS OF THE WAR. Obtained at great expense and forming a complete PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF THE GREAT UNION CONTEST"

Listed as available are stereoscopic views of "Bull Run, Yorktown, Gettysburgh, Fair Oaks, Savage Station, Fredericksburgh, Fairfax, Richmond, Deep Bottom, Monitors, Fort Morgan, Charleston, Florida, Dutch Gap, Pontoon Trains, Hanover Junction, Lookout Mountain, Chickahominy, City Point, Nashville, Petersburg, Bello Plain, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Mobile, Strawberry Plains, &c, &c."

Louis Braille (1809-1852):

In 1952, one hundred years after Braille's death, the American Foundation for the Blind, New York, published THE READING FINGERS, Life of Louis Braille, by Jean Roblin, Translated from the French by Ruth G. Mandalian. It is a beautiful and moving biography.

At the age of three Louis accidentally pierced one of his eyes with a sharp cutting tool in his father's harness-making shop in the French village of Coupvray, near Paris. The onset of purulent ophthalmia and subsequent infection of the other eye left him totally blind.

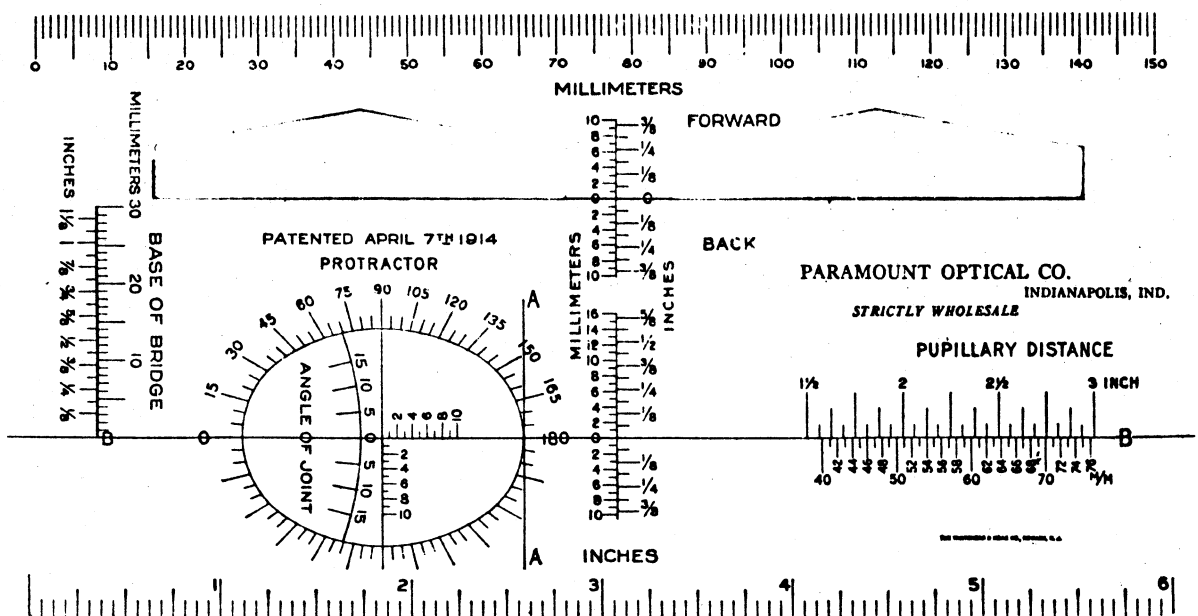
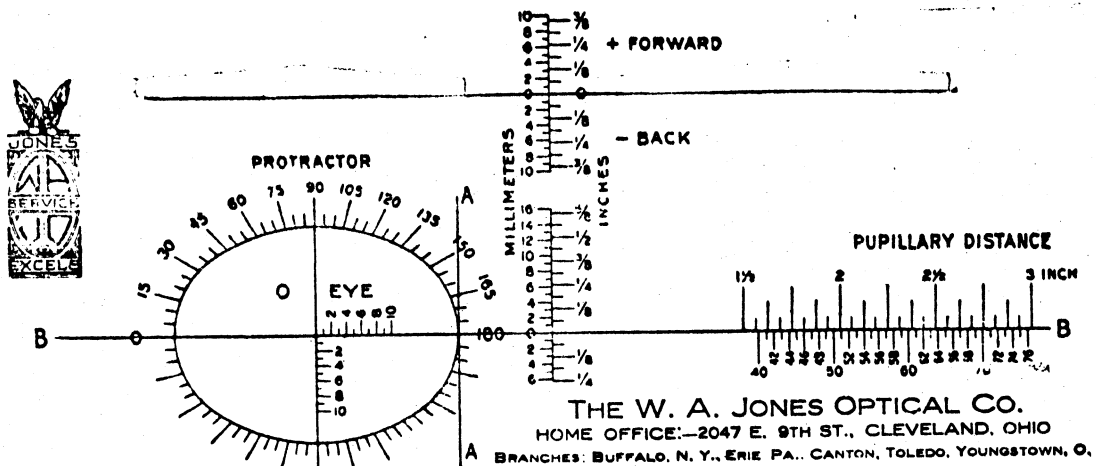
A local abbé and a local teacher became aware of Louis' unusual intelligence at an early age and got him admitted to the Royal Institution for the Young Blind, in Paris in 1819, the same year that Charles Barbier, an artillery captain in Louis XVIII's army announced to the Academy of Science the "invention of a new machine which engraves a writing of secret combination without its being necessary to see the equipment, [i.e., in the dark]." An academy evaluation committee the following year reported, "This process makes communication between the deaf and the blind possible."

Barbier used impressions of dots and dashes on thin cardboard, called "night writing." To extend its use beyond military maneuvers in darkness he devised a phonetic code for use by the blind, named the system Sonography, and attempted to introduce it into the institution where young Braille was a pupil, about 1820-1821. Louis, then 12 years old, learned Sonography, and suggested a great many possible improvements, but could not convince the then 55 year old Barbier. So, Louis undertook to devise a whole new system on his own, and by the time he was 15 he invented a whole new code of 63 combinations representing all of the alphabet, the accents, punctuation marks, and mathematical signs. It was Braille's system which eventually won world-wide acceptance, though Braille never failed to give Barbier full credit for the concept. Barbier died in 1841 at the age of 75. Braille contracted tuberculosis and died in 1852, two days after his own 43rd birthday anniversary. He was buried in the same French village in which he was born.

More leads from Leeds:

Book collector James Leeds, O.D., checks his shelves for every old optometry book mentioned in this Newsletter, almost invariably finding that he has it or a more valuable edition. So he reports that he has the second edition of Bohne's "Handbook for Opticians," 1892, and three of "crusty Dr. Shastid's" books, "An Outline of Ophthalmology," published by the American Optical Co., Southbridge, Massachusetts, in 1927, "Light, the Raw Material of Vision," published by George Wahr, Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1936, and "Ophthalmic Jurisprudence" published by Cleveland Press, Chicago, in 1916. He could not resist adding that he has Vols. I and II of Thomas Young's "Natural Philosophy," New Edition, Taylor & Walton, London, 1845, and a copy of Alex Wood's "Thomas Young, Natural Philosopher," Cambridge University Press, England, 1954. As an aside he says he has a copy of James P.C. Southall's "In the Days of My Youth," University of North Carolina Press, 1947, in which there is "not a word about Geometrical Optics!"

With his chatty letter he enclosed two celluloid (I think) protractors which he found in a trial case purchased from the late Roy Denny, O.D. of Indianapolis, Indiana, who had started practicing optometry in 1917. The two protractors are shown below.



Though both of these are well over 50 years old, and were thoroughly finger-stained from use, they cleaned up readily with detergent and water.

On the back of each are instructions for measuring "pupillary distance," "bridge height," and "position of crest." Also on the back of the W.A. Jones Optical Co. protractor is a metric scale, an inches scale, and an inch-and-diopter conversion table.

The Paramount Optical Co. protractor includes the legend "PATENTED APRIL 7th, 1914" and, in extremely small print, "THE WHITEHEAD & HOAG CO., NEWARK, N.J."

I wonder if anyone collects optical protractors and other ophthalmic measuring platens. Such a collection would tell a story indeed.

"Bill Mac" and barnstorming:

The episode of the involvement of Wm. P. MacCracken, Jr., in the 1932 probe of federal air-mail contracts is told by Virginia Van der Veer Hamilton in an article entitled "Barnstorming the U.S. Mail" in the August 1974 issue of American Heritage, Vol. 25, No. 5, pp. 32-36 & 86-88. Bill MacCracken's role in the fiasco continuing into 1933 and 1934 is described as a headline-making opéra bouffe when then Senator Hugo Black offered a resolution directing Mr. MacCracken's arrest. The whole story included such other familiar persons as Postmaster General James A. Farley, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, Lieutenant Colonel Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, General Douglas MacArthur, previous Postmaster General Walter F. Brown, Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh, Representative Hamilton Fish, Amelia Earhart, Harold Ickes, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Bill Mac's side of the story, not really very different, is told in his biography, "Mr. Mac," by Michael Osborn and Joseph Riggs, with comments by Charles Lindbergh and Mr. Justice Black, published by Southern College of Optometry, Memphis, Tennessee, 1970.

In 1942 Mr. MacCracken was hired by the American Optometric Association as Washington Counsel and served in this role until his death in 1969.

John McAllister, Jr. (1786-1877):

The second of five successive generations of McAllister optometrists was honored by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in a four page "MEMORIAL NOTICE OF JOHN McALLISTER, Jr." by Charles M. Morris in The Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography, Vol. 2, 1868, pp. 92-95. It was noted that he lived to "the venerable age of 91 years, 5 months, and 18 days," a life span that had been exceeded by only one other member of the Society. He had graduated in science from the University of Pennsylvania in 1803. Subsequently he joined his father in the firm of "John McAllister & Son" which "soon became respected through the whole country, and stood at the head of the department--one as much scientific

as of trade--which embraces for its subjects, optical and mathematical instruments." He was a collector of ancient pamphlets, newspapers, maps, and manuscripts and so "was continually appealed to about men, things, and events of former days in Philadelphia." He introduced "the admirable system of numbering houses according to the number of the streets"

#### Schwimmer's luck:

John Kubler: The Life and World of Al Capone, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1971 (\$8.95)

P. 243: Among the seven murdered in the Saint Valentine's Day massacre in Chicago on February 14, 1929, was an optometrist named Reinhardt H. Schwimmer. All of the other six were heavily armed, and they carried cash in their pockets totalling about \$5,000. Wrote Kubler, "Schwimmer was an anomaly. In the gang but not of it, enjoying the company of criminals but not himself inclined to criminality, he had met ["Bugs"] Moran at the Parkway Hotel, where he, too, resided, and became his beglamored friend. He was an optometrist by profession, aged thirty. Like Parker Henderson, he derived an excitement, a vicarious feeling of power from intimacy with gangsters. He had dropped into the warehouse, as he frequently did on his way to work, to see what the North Siders were up to, and he had stayed to chat."

In the photograph of the slaughtered O'Banion gangsters, following p. 256, "The helpless optometrist, Schwimmer, still wore his hat, . . .".

This massacre, ". . . left the Caponeites masters of the Chicago underworld."

#### More about Schwimmer:

Mr. Howard Browne, 11026 Negley Avenue, San Diego, California, did a remarkable amount of research on Dr. Schwimmer for a film script pertaining to the Valentine's Day Massacre. He reports that "Reinie," the victim's nickname, was born December 1, 1899, in Chicago, of German immigrant parents. He was twice married and divorced. Handsome and well-bred, he had no real interest in optometry, having studied it only under his father's insistence. Though he had no criminal record whatsoever, he became a gangster buff, dressing like them, patronizing their tailors and haberdashers, aping their mannerisms, etc. He was gunned down with eight machinegun bullets and a cluster of 12 buckshot only because he happened to be present when the killers walked in. Death was instantaneous.

#### 1934 Contact Lenses:

A clipping from the Feb. 16 issue of the Chattanooga News - Free Press features a Mr. John S. Clark who still has in their original case a pair of contact lenses made for him in 1934. It was reported that in 1934 he made a trip to New York City "where two German specialists fitted him with heavy, glass contact lenses." He wore them almost two years, apparently every other day. Then he submitted to surgery, a corneal transplant.



The clipping was sent to me by C. Wayne Shearer, O.D., whereupon I wrote to Mr. Clark to suggest that he take steps to make sure that these lenses eventually get placed in a good museum. Understandably, I recommended the International Library, Archives, and Museum of Optometry, Inc.

"Listed Optometrists" in 1939:

O.H.S. member James Leeds, O.D., found an interesting pamphlet among the professional effects of the late Roy E. Denny, O.D., entitled ASSOCIATION OF LISTED OPTOMETRISTS, by J. Fred Andreae, O.D., Secretary, Baltimore, Maryland, 1939. Identified as a "Confidential List, Not For Publication," it includes in the foreword, "The primary reason for the compilation of this list of names is to provide a means of knowing to whom to refer a patient who may move to another city." Listed are approximately 200 names in the then 48 states, the District of Columbia, five Canadian provinces, and one in South Africa. Inserted in the pamphlet was a certificate signed by Dr. Andreae and dated Dec. 1, 1939, with the declaration "Be it known by virtue of qualification, ethical professional practice and environment Roy E. Denny is recommended as worthy of the full confidence of those requiring visual care."

An additional insert requests the recipient to "Please check this list carefully and advise whether there are any names included which do not comply with requirements, i.e., practice being conducted in the same manner and similar location as the ethical dentists and physicians in the same locality." Also, "Please send in the names of those optometrists meeting the requirements and whose names have been omitted."

This donation is being forwarded to the International Library, Archives, and Museum of Optometry, Inc.

J. Louis Saks (1899-1975):

The death of "J.L." on February 3 brought to a close the personalized history of optometry in the Republic of South Africa. Born in London, England, on February 14, 1899, he went to South Africa with his parents at the age of six, returned to London in 1918 to study and qualify in pharmacy and optometry, and returned to Pretoria, South Africa, where he commenced the practice of optometry on his own in 1925. His successful defense in a crucial court decision in 1931 effectively established the professional status of optometry in South Africa. His subsequent participation in every vital phase of organizational activity, educational, editorial, administrative, political, legislative, financial, interprofessional, and fraternal, made him a living legend, truly the personification of his profession.

So it was with heavy heart that, upon learning of his death, I lifted the folder from my correspondence file labeled "Saks, J.L." in order to transfer the contents to the ILAMO (International Library,

Archives, and Museum of Optometry). But first I carefully, if not indeed lovingly, arranged the well over 100 pieces of correspondence in chronological sequence. The first was an introductory letter dated 30th July, 1956 from J.L. Saks & Sons to Dr. Henry Wm. Hofstetter, and the last was a December 1974 letter to "J.L." from "Hank." Between these two is a veritable chronology of South African optometry interspersed with arguments, personal expressions of hope and distress, touching commentary on people and things, and some philosophy.

It is not easy to separate one's self from such nostalgia-eliciting memoranda, but I do remind myself that the transfer of this file is not a separation; rather it is merely assuring history scholars and posterity that the information is now available for sharing.

#### Recollections of Dr. LeRoy Ryer:

This is the title of a warm, friendly, and very touching account by Harold M. Fisher, O.D., who practiced for many years in association with Dr. Ryer. It appears in the December 1974 issue of the Journal of the American Optometric Association, Vol. 45, No. 12, pp. 1424-1428.

#### Allium sativum:

So classified by Linnaeus, the great eighteenth-century taxonomist, as a member of the lily family (along with the onion, the leek, and the shallot), garlic seems always to have been enlivened by myth. All of the oldest cultures -- China, Mesopotamia, Egypt -- invested garlic with a multiplicity of powers.

There was even a warning against its use in the influential thirteenth-century "Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum" as "Hurtfull for sight."

This we are told by Berton Roueché in a PROFILES feature entitled "A Friend in Disguise" in the Oct. 28, 1974, issue of The New Yorker, Vol. 50, No. 36, pp. 55-58 & 61-62.

#### Dark adaptation:

Though phenomena identifiable as night blindness were mentioned by the ancient Greeks and Arabians, and physical photometry was initiated by Lambert in the 18th century, the quantitative measurement of the process of dark adaptation was not begun until the latter half of the 19th century, by Richard Foerster.

Thilo Von Haugwitz has authored a brief historical review of adaptometry in the July 1974 issue of Augenspiegel, Vol. 20, No. 7, pp. 318-328, with illustrations of instruments used by Foerster, Winger, Nagel, Piper, and several others in an article entitled, "Zur Geschichte der Adaptometrie."

Lacemaker's condenser:

This expression is not in the current edition of the Dictionary of Visual Science, but it is the name of an early visual aid. It is illustrated in use in plate number 3(a) facing page 32 of William T. O'Dea's "Social History of Lighting," Macmillan Co., New York, 1958. I am told that an original lacemaker's condenser is on exhibit at the Koehler House Museum in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

This most notable invention was made at the beginning of the 17th century. It consisted of simply one or more glass spheres filled with water to concentrate the light from a candle flame upon a small area of work. The above-mentioned lacemaker's condenser, as it came to be known, had a single candle and four spheres, thus concentrating the candle light into four areas for four different workers. The apparatus was also used by engravers, jewelers, cobblers, and others who worked at fine tasks at night, but there were not many of them. Such extravagance was rare.

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