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From the O.A.I.C.C.N.:

The January 1992 issue of the Ophthalmic Antiques International Collectors Club Newsletter, No. 38, reports the record prices received at Christie's in London in October for a pair of ca. 1760 folding eyeglasses and their original papier-maché case at £2,905.50, and a ca. 1700 leather-framed reading glass at £1,565.25. The odd costs include auction charges. The buyer was a continental bidder on the telephone.

Also included on pages 5-6 is a very authoritative sounding article by J.M. Devriendt of Belgium on the history of spyglasses and opera glasses, the former being defined as "a pocket-sized Galilean telescope." A footnote explains that the list of seven references submitted with the manuscript is available on request to Editor Ronald J.L. MacGregor, 47 Chapelwell St., Saltcoats, Ayrshire, KA21 5EB, U.K.

More O.A.I.C.C. news:

The April 1992 issue of the Ophthalmic Antiques International Collectors Club Newsletter, No. 39, celebrates the 10th anniversary of existence and good health of the club, a London-headquartered group. The club started with a letter of invitation published in the May 28, 1982, issue of The Optician and the prompt enrollment of about 75 collectors from about 18 countries. Initially administered entirely by Derek C. Davidson it now functions under the direction of six officers, each with assigned duties.

Among other mentioned items is the news that opticians Fritz Rathschuler and Leonardo del Vecchio of Italy have combined their antique collections to form the "Rathschuler-Luxottica Collection" comprising 1,200 pieces.

The feature item is a two page article entitled, "Pierre Marly--King of Spectacles" based on translations from French publications made by Mrs. Valerie Mellor, one of the club officers. The feature includes some very personal biographical information about the man and his famous collection.

Another three pages is a list of about 50 "Trademarks and Mould Marks on Eyebaths" collected by George Sturrock. He includes detailed information on about half of them and seeks further information on the others.

Apparently prompted by the aroused interest, the club arranged for a limited number of fine glazed ceramic floral eyebaths (eyecups to Americans) with hand-painted decoration to be available to members only at £50 each. They are all sold and are now collectors' items!

Enclosed with the newsletter was a flier promoting the sale of a 56-page book entitled "Collecting Ophthalmic Antiques" authored by Ronald J.S. MacGregor. It is published by the O.A.I.C.C. at 47 Chapelwell Street, Saltcoats, Ayrshire, KA21 5EB, United Kingdom, at £3.75 per copy plus postage and packing.

A century of the Optician:

The November 29, 1991, centenary issue of Optician, Vol.202, No. 5329 reproduces on its front cover the tattered front of the April 2, 1891, issue, Vol. 1, No. 1, of The Optician, celebrating a hundred years of weekly publications except for one issue in 1941. The present issue includes 14 articles by as many authors reviewing quite anecdotally various aspects of ophthalmic developments in the century long interim.

Perhaps more revealing than the reviews and anecdotes is the cover itself insofar as it discloses the earlier breadth of technological coverage under the rubric of "optician." Today's editions subtitle the serial as "The weekly journal for optometrists and dispensing opticians." The 1891 issue identified it as "The organ of the Optical, Mathematical, Philosophical, Electrical, and Photographic Instrument Industries and Review of the Jewellery and Allied Trades."

Four equal-sized boxed advertisements filling the major area of the cover announce that (1) Dallmeyer's unrivalled lenses are used by all photographers of respect throughout the world, (2) H. Joseph and Co., manufacturing jewelers and silversmiths will send their catalogues free on application, (3) George Basnett offers patented articles, match boxes, cigarette cases, and combination boxes as agent for the disposal of jewelers' surplus stock, and (4) Purdom & Stokes, Optic Works, manufactures every description of spectacles, frames - gold, silver, and steel, makes pebble lens, optical sphero-cylinders, prism, etc. plus repairs of every kind, and spectacles to order - - - prescriptions filled by return post.

Indeed, this journal must be the world's most complete repository of a century of optometric history as it evolved in the English-speaking world.

Vision and reading:

An audiologist acquaintance of mine once pointed out that in many universities clinical audiology, unlike optometry, was academically paired off with the speech discipline under the combined rubric of "Speech and Hearing," and sometimes even

"Speech, Hearing, Theatre, and Drama." It was his theory that this was at least one factor that has hampered audiology's advancement as a distinct professional clinical entity. To enhance his point he suggested that the analogy for optometry would have been it's academic sharing of identity with another educational discipline under the rubric, say, of "Reading and Seeing."

I was reminded of this comment by an article entitled "Eyeglasses Yesterday and Today" authored by Lucy Latané Gordon in the March 1992 issue of the Wilson Library Bulletin, Vol. 66, No. 7, pp. 40-44, and 125. Her opening sentences are, "Reading and writing books both depend on the eyes. And a very large percentage of eyes depend on eyeglasses." With that assertion she then traces eyeglass history from Sir Roger Bacon's "reading stone with its plane side down," through the invention of spectacles, the role of guilds, religious concerns and suspicions, documentation by contemporary graphic artists, the slow emergence of modern spectacle temples, the influence of fashion, and the advancement of optical glass and lens technology.

Approximately half of the review provides very detailed and helpful information about several museums which she obviously visited in the United States and Europe. She reminds us that we "have a choice of over seventy private collections and museums in the United States and Europe."

The article is impressively well written, with only two disappointments for me. One is her not mentioning ILAMO, and the other is her reference to Salvino d'Armati without calling the reader's attention to the evidence that the inscription is a hoax.

H.W H.

Spectaclemakers guilds:

"Contributions to the History of the Worshipful Company of Spectaclemakers" is one of a series of three papers on the "Court Collection," co-authored by Thomas H. Court and Moritz von Rohr, and appearing in the Transactions of the Optical Society (London). Though this paper is identified as the second of a series, the first and third papers had appeared earlier in volume 30, nos. 1 (pp. 1-21) and 5 (pp. 207-260), 1928-29, dealing with post-seventeenth century spectacles and the development of the telescope respectively. The presently reviewed paper, the second, appears in volume 31, no. 2, 1929-30, pp. 54-90.

It is not clear who Mr. Court was except that he had an outstanding collection of museum and archival items pertaining to optics, which are repeatedly referred to as the "Court Collection." The other author, von Rohr, was in his early 60's at the time of the articles and widely known for his technological contributions at Zeiss in Jena. It appears that Court provided the historical facts, documents, etc. while von Rohr systematized the analysis and

interpreted the interrelationships, a truly complementary partnership. Their resources included also the files of the Worshipful Company of Spectaclemakers and the Zeiss museum in Jena, Germany, as well as several listed published references.

It seems that the WCS, chartered in 1629, was modeled after the much earlier spectaclemakers guilds on the continent, especially the Antwerp, Netherlands, center in the middle of the fourteenth century and the similar Nürnberg and Regensburg, Germany, Companies in the middle of the fifteenth century, as evidenced by analogous features in their by-laws and policies.

Except for the names of a few WCS members, little information survived the Great Fire of London in 1666. There are indications that the WCS had much less resistance to its being chartered than did most guilds, because lens grinding per se did not overlap the turf of any other established group. On the other hand, the apparent simplicity of the occupation made it difficult to substantiate any claim to being a skilled craft. The craft, incidentally, included watch-glass making (apparently a skill not claimed or contested by the clockmakers).

The article describes membership eligibility criteria, dues, fines, penalties, and quality enforcement procedures, with examples. Such terms as master optician, journeyman, apprentice, master-artisan, spectaclemaker, shopkeeper, optical instrument maker, warden, master, and freeman permeate the article with presumed familiarity on the part of the reader, so that remoteness from London lingo is something of a handicap in the understanding of membership privileges, duties, and competitive advantages and disadvantages inside and outside the City walls.

Though the underlying theme of Company membership was equality of privileges and products the influences of entrepreneurial factors were persistent. For example, one section of the article deals with the three ways to gain "Company's Freedom" (membership and licensure), namely, "Servitude, Patrimony, and Redemption." Servitude was of course the ideal, the on-the-job training period; patrimony was through family connection; and redemption was by simple payment without instruction.

An interesting sidelight is the discussion of opticians' signs starting with that of John Yarwell, ca. 1675, called "Archimedes and Crown" which showed Archimedes looking through a long telescope and four pair of spectacles in the four corners. The signs served in lieu of house numbers and also were reproduced in design on owners' printed documents. The use of signs was done away with in London in about 1766 as their creaking noise swinging in the wind became an intolerable nuisance.

"It seems that, about the middle of the eighteenth century, the political and civic rights and advantages that the freedom of the City afforded caused quite a number of people to become members

of City Companies, including the Spectaclemakers' Company. They were admitted by redemption, viz. the payment of a small sum, and we cannot doubt that the value of its membership to the members of the optical handicraft was accordingly diminished."

Subsequently the WCS gradually divorced itself from the optical industry. Toward the end of the 19th century it developed a diploma scheme for the ophthalmic optician which by the date of this article had received recognition by the government as a form of professional certification.

Supplementing the article are chronological and alphabetical lists of 250 of the more important members of the WCS and leading independent opticians, with many personal notes of their roles, qualifications, and involvements into the early part of the 19th century.

Crossed cylinders methods:

In a serialized article entitled "Die Kreuzzylindermethode" beginning on page 25 of the February 20, 1992, issue of Deutsche Optiker Zeitung, vol. 47, no. 2, Egon Weiler undertakes a thoroughly analytical and procedural exposition of the crossed cylinders methodology in refraction. What prompts our attention here is his brief historical commentary on its utilization in Germany.

The author credits American ophthalmologist Edward Jackson with the 1887 explanation of its use in the precise determination of subjective refraction. He further credits Dr. Jackson for furthering its use by pointing out in 1911 that it also can help in the precise determination of the cylinder axis.

In Germany the technique was for a long time treated in literature merely as a supplementary refractive technique and largely ignored, and therefore quite unused in practice. Not until 1937-1939 was the Jackson method considered seriously when Dr. W. Thiele and Peter Abel presented it as a basic component of an effective refractive procedure requiring only optotype or letters as visual criteria. Then for the first time in March 1941 the procedure was incorporated into the curriculum of the school of optometry in Berlin.

Today, says Weiler, the crossed cylinders techniques supplant virtually all other astigmatism measurement methods (in Germany).

London eyewear and telescopes:

Vol.30, 1928-29, of the Transactions of the Optical Society (London) includes two well prepared articles on optical history by co-authors Thomas H. Court and Moritz von Rohr, in issue no. 1, pp. 1-21 and no. 2, pp. 207-260. The former is entitled "On the Development of Spectacles in London from the End of the Seventeenth

Century," and the latter "A History of the Development of the Telescope from about 1675 to 1830 based on Documents in the Court Collections." Both articles rely primarily on Mr. Court's London Collection of optics-related documents but also on von Rohr's technical familiarity with the contents of the Zeiss museum in Jena, Germany.

English spectacles before 1666 are very imperfectly known because of the loss of records in the Great Fire. Improvement of grinding and polishing techniques together with the development of temples as well as new frame materials subsequently made London very competitive during the 18th century. The 19th century provided a less favorable period for the master craftsmen of London because of the growth of large spectacle factories in Rathenow, Germany, and the United States. The technical details involved in these trends are thoroughly discussed and illustrated.

The telescope paper similarly deals with developments that should be of unusual interest to telescope collectors because of its technical details. From a more purely optometric point of view the paper documents two historical features. One is the involvement of many spectaclemakers with the prestigious scientific community in their role as master opticians with fabrication skills. The other is the beginning of graphic documentation of the optical artisans' contributions to technological development along instrument lines as influenced by their academic connections, in contrast with the more traditionally and restrictively secret skill and knowledge transfer under the spectaclemakers guild pattern.

In fact, the two articles themselves illustrate the then emerging dichotomy of the initially combined optical fields under the rubric of "optician." The one involved the correction of focal defects of the eye (optometry) and the other the magnification of the object to be viewed (instrument optics).

The Salvino myth:

On pages 27-30 of the July 1991 issue of the Newsletter OHS member Robert Sandor of Stockholm, Sweden, chides us gently but firmly for our inclusion of entries about the name of Salvinus d'Armati as a part of optometric or spectacle history. What he neglected to give us credit for was the fact that in each of the three instances we included one or more phrases or memoranda calling attention to the lack of validity of the tombstone legend.

In the first instance (vol. 21, pp. 4-5) we captioned the article, "A persistent historical hoax?" and added a paragraph referencing Rosen's "exhaustive analysis and convincing challenge of the validity." In the second instance (vol. 21, p. 27) we reminded the readers that "historical scholarship has concluded that Armati was not the true inventor of eyeglasses." In the third instance (vol. 22, p. 17) the brief report was captioned "A myth preserved in stone" and Armati was identified as "an alleged

inventor of spectacles." Attention was also called to the fact that Sandor's article would appear in the subsequent issue. I have taken further precaution of including the word "myth" in the caption of this commentary.

Sandor's expression of concern raises a secondary issue of editorial policy. Should the fact of non-acceptance of the validity of the tombstone legend justify exclusion of commentary about it? Indeed, I think not. The long existence of a false allegation may not only be of historical significance on its own merits but it also, in this instance, tells us much about the importance of spectacles in the minds of prominent as well as ordinary people of a centuries-long era. In terms of the popular appreciation of the role of spectacles in the development of civilization the false legend on the stone really tells us more than if it had been true!

H.W H.

Puerto Rican optometry museum:

Puerto Rican optometric history is being preserved through the dedication of Amarilis Noriega, the librarian at the School of Optometry at InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico. Having developed during its past decade a first-class optometry library to serve the students and the island, she is now turning to the next most important documentary need, an educational optometry museum.

The remote geographic separation of Puerto Rico from the mainland collections, such as ILAMO, emphasizes the archival importance of a museum not only for the presently isolated optometry students there but also for the promising growth of the profession throughout all of the heavily populated Caribbean Islands. Puerto Rico itself has a fine optometric tradition comparable to that of many American states, but the tangible and displayable evidence is mostly in the private hands of a very few appreciative collectors. This must be institutionally preserved to serve the future, to provide future students glimpses of their professional heritage, which, in the Spanish tradition, can date back proudly to Daça de Valdez in 1623.

So, if you have something old, a letter, a lens cloth, a phorometer trial frame, a book, an advertising brochure, just anything either optometric or Puerto Rican, or both, that represents early optometry there or elsewhere, send it to Ms. Noriega at the School of Optometry, InterAmerican University, Post Office Box 1293, Hato Rey, Puerto Rico 00918.

Earliest Dutch guild?

Wondering if it might be possible to find some details about the occasionally cited middle 14th century spectacle makers guild in Antwerp (The Netherlands), I challenged two optician-

optometrist collectors of antique spectacles in Holland to make inquiry.

Say they, "The profession of optician was regulated in the 'Gilde van de Zijdelakenkopers.' This can be translated as Guild of the Merchants in Silk Textiles. This guild was situated in the town of Middelburg. There is no information about an independent guild of opticians in the Netherlands, and there is no further information about other guilds that may have incorporated opticians. The only known data are from Middleburg."

The two responding optician-optometrists are Kees Kortland (Rotterdam) and Paul Aangenendt (Eindhoven). The latter has three coins stamped by the Middelburg guild (1677, 1689, 1705). The optical members of the guild were called Brillenmakers.

H.W H.

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