

A Bit of History ... by Mari de Wit

This month's spotlight is on Elmer Jefferson Bissell who served as our third local ROSA president in 1917. Elmer Bissell was born on October 31, 1861 (for the statisticians among us: that is almost 150 years to date). Dr. Bissell grew up in Rochester and attended Rochester public schools. He later studied medicine in the University of Michigan, receiving his degree in that celebrated institution in 1883. He was an ophthalmic surgeon by trade and interestingly enough, he resigned from the OSA membership only 4 years after becoming our local president. From the minutes of the 8th Annual (national) OSA meeting on Oct. 26-27, 1923 (where they kept track of membership in rather great detail) under "list of losses by resignation" I found E. J. Bissell. A detailed biography for Dr. Bissell is at the end of the newsletter.

Did you know... that at the start of the National OSA and our Local Chapter "In attendance at the organizing meeting 23 November 1915, were P. G. Nutting, HT. Kellner, F. E. Ross, C. H. Frederick, Howard Minchin, Adolph Lomb, F. B. Saegmuller, W. B. Rayton, and L. A. Jones. Dr. Nutting called the meeting to order. Dr. Kellner was chosen temporary chairman and L. A. Jones was temporary secretary. The first motion adopted was "that an Optical Society be formed." The second motion was "that steps be taken to form a local section of a general organization." The committee to draft a constitution and by-laws was Nutting, Lomb, Rayton, and Jones. Six additional men were invited to be charter members: J. N. Blanchard, Professor Henry E. Lawrence, Edward Bausch, *E. J. Bissell*, George M. Saegmüller, and M. B. Hodgson. All except Professor Lawrence signed the constitution on 7 December 1915. The first officers were Nutting, President; Kellner and Minchin, Vice-presidents; Lomb, Treasurer; Ross, Corresponding Secretary; Jones, Recording Secretary; Bissell, Frederick, Rayton and F. B. Saegmüller, Council-at-Large. The first program committee was Kellner, Minchin and Jones."

In the May 1916 election, Kellner moved to President, Bissell to Vice-President, Nutting became Corresponding Secretary (but by December he was gone-to Pittsburgh where he arranged the first annual meeting of the national society 28 December 1916), and Dr. Mees joined the Council. Notable among a their twice a month series of meetings were those addressed by Professor Richtmyer of Cornell on "Cooperation in Research" 21 November (which was published on page 1 of volume 1 of the Journal 1917) and by Professor James P. C. Southall of Columbia University, "A Survey of the Historical Development of Optical Science," which was "intended by the speaker to arouse greater interest in the study of optics in America." Thus ended the first year of the Optical Society.

BISSELL, ELMER JEFFERSON, Rochester, New York, was born in Vernon, New York, October 31, 1861, the son of T. J. Bissell, D.D., and Mary J. (Bourne) Bissell. He attended the public schools of Rochester, and later studied medicine in the University of Michigan, receiving his degree in that celebrated institution in 1883. Dr. Bissell took post-graduate courses in ear and eye hospitals in this country and Europe. In 1884 he held the position of assistant physician in the ear and eye department in the University of Michigan, and was an ophthalmic and aural surgeon to the Rochester Homœopathic Hospital. He was ex-president of the American Ophthalmological, Otological and Laryngological Society.

Source : History of Homœopathy by William Harvey King

Ophthalmic Surgery

Transactions Of World Congress Of Homoeopathic Physicians & Surgeons By Pemberton Dudley Volume: 1893 May / June; Author: Elmer J Bissell

...Dr. Bissell...in closing the discussion, said: The question has been asked me regarding the special preparation of cocaine. I have had no special connection with it, and have not seen it used in our work. I do not think it is superior to any other anaesthetic agents that we have, and it is unpleasant to use, in soiling the clothing and staining, although it may be used. I think in one or two cases it has acted unfavorably, seemingly aggravating the case, and was probably used too strong; but I immediately discarded it and took something else.

...Dr. Bissell : If I may be pardoned a word, a point that has greatly impressed me of late is the work along the orthoptic line that we are to do after we have operated.

American Homeopathic Ophthalmological, Otolological and Laryngological Society.
Secretary: Elmer J. Bissell. M.D Rochester. N. Y. (1897)
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President: Elmer J. Bissell. M.D Rochester. N. Y. (1899)

PROCEEDINGS OF THE TWELFTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN HOMOEOPATHIC, OPHTHALMOLOGICAL, OTOLOGICAL AND LARYNGOLOGICAL SOCIETY, HELD IN ATLANTIC CITY, N. J., JUNE 19TH AND 20TH, 1899.

First Day. — Morning Session.

The society met in the Hotel Dennis, and the first session was called to order at 10.40 A.M., Monday, June 19th, by the President, Dr. Elmer J. Bissell, with the following remarks :

...Previous to giving my Annual Address, I wish to say that I concluded after looking over the long program that you came here to hear each other rather than to hear me. I have, therefore, reduced my address to very small proportions, in order that you may have a longer time for the exchange of thoughts among yourselves.

Dr. Bissell then presented the President's Address, and followed it by declaring the Society open for the transaction of business:

...Everyone interested in either of the departments as represented in the society will find it of the greatest service and value to become a member.... The same special railroad rates will be arranged for those attending the meetings of our society, and special hotel rates can also be obtained.... We urge everyone to make an early effort to not only prepare a paper, but to make this trip a part of his summer outing.

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS & REFERENCES:

AHOOOLS President's Annual Address— Our Specialties as Related to Mental Development and Modern Educational Methods. By Elmer J. Bissell, M.D

Elmer Bissell was an ophthalmologist. I believe that he was later involved in setting up an institute in Birmingham, Alabama, and has a road named after him on which Children's Hospital of Alabama. Children's Hospital Neurology is located.

- 1) http://books.google.com/books?id=Fh-gAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA159&lpg=PA159&dq=Elmer+J.+Bissell+ophthalmology+-cleveland+-birmingham&source=bl&ots=cyO9_LHzog&sig=-yKG9R7eUYHWoCFI9scqjNMR1yc&hl=en&ei=K26rTt22Jorkggfv-YzwDw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=8&ved=0CDkQ6AEwBw#v=onepage&q&f=false
- 2) <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F50617FC355D11738DDDA90A94DE405B8985F0D3>
- 3) http://books.google.com/books/about/Transactions_of_the_World_s_Congress_of.html?id=QgpRfaWMg5UC
- 4) <http://www.homeoint.org/history/bio/b/bissellej.htm>
- 5) New York Times Published: June 20, 1899
<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F50617FC355D11738DDDA90A94DE405B8985F0D3>