

## A Bit of History ... by Mari deWit

This month's spotlight is on our first president: Perley Gilman Nutting. Perley Gilman Nutting (1873–1949) was the founder of the Optical Society of America and served as its first president from 1916-1917.

It was November 18, 1915 when nine Rochester scientists met at the University of Rochester: four from Eastman Kodak Co., four from Bausch & Lomb, and one from the University. They met again a week later, and again on December 7th, when they formed an Optical Society and named it "The Rochester Association for Advancement of Applied Optics." On January 4, 1916, they held their first meeting.

Upon multiple requests from "optics types" elsewhere to join,<sup>1,2</sup> Perley Gilman Nutting was more than willing to adapt the constitution and by-laws to form a national society. By doing this they established the first OSA Local Section in 1916, in Rochester, New York (USA). Ninety years later the OSA has evolved into the professional home for 14,000 optical physicists and engineers around the globe, with thousands of individual section members located in OSA Local Sections around the world. In recognition of its global reach and focus, since 2008 the Society has been known as OSA—The Optical Society.

### Biography:

- 1897: Ph.D. Cornell University
- 1899: University of California: Academic Colleges: Master Graduate
- 1899: Stanford University
- 1903: Physicist with the U.S. Bureau of Standards, Washington D.C.
- 1903: Optical engineer, Eastman Kodak Co. Residence, 11 Fair View Heights, Rochester, N.Y.
- 1904: Constructed one of the earliest, if not the first, neon sign, which was displayed at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition; however, this story has been disputed<sup>3</sup>
- 1906: Ph.D., 3 Kodak Park, Rochester, N. Y.
- 1910: Staff member at Eastman Kodak Company
- 1912: George Washington University, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Physics
- 1912: Author of "Outlines of Applied Optics"
- 1917: Director of Research at Westinghouse, Pittsburgh, P.A.
- 1924: Geophysicist with the Geological Survey
- 1943: Retired



### References:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.opnmagazine-digital.com/opn/200902?pg=14&pm=2&fs=1#pg14>

<sup>2</sup> NBS, Yale and Cornell

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Making\\_Neon\\_Signs](http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Making_Neon_Signs), and John K. Howard, "OSA's First Four Presidents," OPN, February 2009.

- [http://wn.com/perley\\_g\\_nutting\\_/#/biography](http://wn.com/perley_g_nutting_/#/biography)

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perley\\_G.\\_Nutting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perley_G._Nutting)

- Past presidents of OSA-RS: <http://www.osarochester.org/presidents.html> (Content taken from "Common Origins of The Institute of Optics and the Optical Society of America" by Susan Houde-Walter, *A Jewel in the Crown*, 2004)

- Past presidents of OSA national:

[http://www.osa.org/About\\_Osa/Leadership\\_and\\_Volunteers/Officers/Past\\_Presidents.aspx](http://www.osa.org/About_Osa/Leadership_and_Volunteers/Officers/Past_Presidents.aspx)

### Books by Perley Nutting:

<http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/lookupname?key=Nutting%2C%20P.%20G.%20%28Perley%20Gilman%29%2C%20b.%201873>

<http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/lookupname?key=Nutting%2C%20Perley%20Gilman%2C%201873->