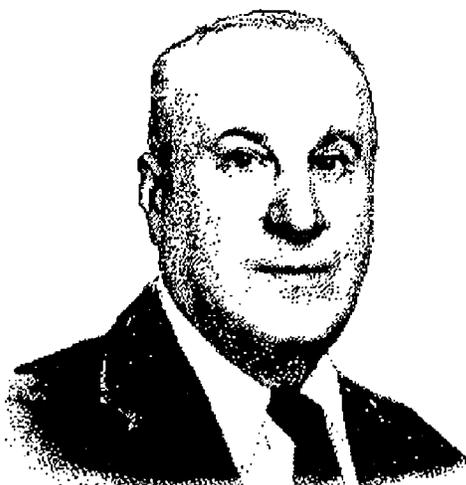


## THE HISTORY OF THE DEXTER AWARD

### Part II: The First Decade

*Aaron J. Ihde, University of Wisconsin*

Ralph Edward Oesper (1886-1977), professor of analytical chemistry at the University of Cincinnati, received the first Dexter Award in 1956 for his career-long contributions to the history of chemistry. He translated many historical works for American publication and wrote numerous short biographies of chemists, ranging from the most distinguished to some who were truly obscure. He also taught a course in history of chemistry and gave many public and private lectures on the subject. In 1975 he published *The Human Side of Scientists*, a book of anecdotes about chemists which reflected his deep interest in people. During his many trips to Europe, he visited working chemists and collected books and pictures for a



Ralph E. Oesper

collection which has been given to the University of Cincinnati, where he also endowed a faculty position in the history of chemistry and chemical education. He died at the age of 91, remaining active in the field until the end.

The 1957 award to Williams Haynes (1886-1970) was primarily for his six-volume history of the American chemical industry. Haynes was an authority on chemical industry and chemical economics who, for many years, was publisher of several technical magazines. He was also the author of a series of popular works on industrial chemists and the chemical industry.

Eva Vivian Armstrong (1877-1962) received the award in 1958. She was not college educated, but in 1911 began working as secretary to Edgar Fahs Smith, Chairman of the Chemistry Department at the University of Pennsylvania and



Williams Haynes

Vice-Provost of the University. She continued as Smith's personal secretary when he retired in order to assist in cataloging and organizing his very extensive collection of books, pictures, letters, manuscripts, medals and other memorabilia. Following his death, she became secretary and curator of the Collection, which Mrs. Smith donated to the University of Pennsylvania. She served in this capacity until 1949. By this time she had played a role in bringing into reality an annual publication, *Chymia*, as a vehicle for publication of work in history of chemistry. She served as secretary of the Board of Editors until 1953. During her period as curator, she published 20 papers dealing with the Collection and also with the lives of important chemists, using material from the Collection.



Eva V. Armstrong



John Read

John Read (1884-1963), winner of the award in 1959, was born in southwest England and educated in London and Zurich, where he took his doctorate under Alfred Werner. He taught briefly in London and Australia before taking his permanent position at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. At St. Andrews, his humanistic leanings were fortified by finding a book collection rich in works on alchemy and early chemistry. This led to his writing *Prelude to Chemistry*, which was published in 1935 and proved to be a popular treatise which explained alchemy in relation to its scientific, artistic and literary setting. Read pursued stereochemical research until his retirement and left a major impact with his many books ranging from organic chemistry texts to historical treatises.



Denis I. Duveen

The first four recipients of the Dexter Award were over 70 years of age. Denis Ian Duveen (b. 1910), the fifth awardee, broke that pattern in 1960 at age 50. Born in London, a relative of Duveen, the art dealer, Denis was educated at Oxford with additional studies in Paris and London. During World War II, he did chemical work in ordnance. When the war ended, he became chemist with Ashe Laboratories but, by the end of the forties, had determined to emigrate to the U.S. and establish a soap corporation near New York City. Even while in college he had begun collecting books on alchemy and early chemistry. This collecting continued even during the war years and by the late forties he had brought together more than 3,000 volumes. He prepared a bibliography, *Bibliotheca Alchemica et Chemica*, which was published in 1949. He placed his collection with the New



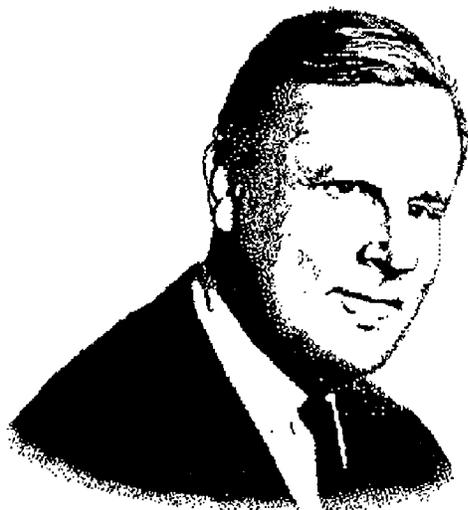
James R. Partington

York book dealer, Kraus, for sale. It was purchased by the University of Wisconsin in 1950. By this time, Duveen had decided that collecting in the whole field of chemistry was an unsound practice and he decided to specialize in the chemistry of Lavoisier and his period. The books in his collection pertaining to this subject were not included in the Wisconsin sale. He continued collecting Lavoisier material and ultimately published a bibliography of the works of Lavoisier and his contemporaries. This collection was put up for sale about 1960 and was purchased by Cornell University. Duveen's contributions, while strongly focused on collecting and bibliographic matters, included numerous papers prepared from holdings in his collection.

The Dexter Award went to James Riddick Partington (1886-1965) of Queen Mary College, University of London, in 1961. Partington was educated in Manchester and Berlin, where he studied specific heats of gases under Nernst. He engaged in wartime research during World War I and then

became a faculty member of Queen Mary College. He is well-known for his numerous papers and books on physical and inorganic chemistry, and on history of chemistry. At the time he received the award, he was publishing his projected four-volume history of chemistry, a definitive text which, because of his death in 1965, was not brought fully to completion. Part II of Volume I remains forever incomplete.

Henry Marshall Leicester (b. 1906), winner of the 1962 award, became an active participant in the history of chemistry in the 1940's. Born in San Francisco, educated in Stanford through a Ph.D. in organic chemistry, he found himself a victim of the Depression of the thirties when he moved through a sequence of jobs. While a research associate at Ohio State



Henry M. Leicester

University, he found a full collection of the *Journal of the Russian Physico-Chemical Society*. While reading the journal, he became interested in the lives and contributions of Russian chemists and was soon deeply involved in the history of chemistry. Finally obtaining a permanent position as Professor of Biochemistry in the College of Physicians and Surgeons-San Francisco, he combined research in dental biochemistry with research in history of chemistry. He contributed two source books, a history of chemistry, a history of biochemistry, and a translation of Lomonosov's publications on corpuscular theory. Leicester became active in the History of Chemistry Division in the forties, serving as Chairman of the Division for several years, and becoming editor of *Chymia* following the death of Tenny L. Davis in 1949.

Douglas McKie (1896-1967), winner of the 1963 award, was born in England, the son of a Scottish soldier, whose military career he planned to emulate. While serving on the western front during World War I, McKie was so seriously injured that his military career was permanently ended. He



Douglas McKie

studied chemistry at University College, London, and became a junior faculty member in Chemistry and in the recently created Department of History and Philosophy of Science headed by Abraham Wolf. McKie published a biography of Lavoisier in 1934 and continued to study the career of that chemical pioneer the rest of his life. He was also a student of Joseph Black. McKie contributed numerous books and papers on various aspects of the history of chemistry and founded the journal, *Annals of Science*.

The winner of the 1964 award, Eduard Farber (1892-1969), was born in Galicia, then Austria-Hungary, now a part



Eduard Farber

of the Ukraine. His father was a Leipzig businessman who expected his son to follow in his footsteps. Farber had an intellectual leaning which resulted in early rebellion and his father finally permitted him to attend the University of Leipzig. After completing his doctorate, he worked with Carl Neuberg at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin. Because of weak eyes, he was not obliged to serve in the German army, but was forced to leave the Institute and supervise the conversion of a fermentation plant to production of nitroglycerine. After the war, he became Director of Chemical Research with Holzhydrolyse A.G. in Mannheim. Farber fled Germany in 1938, coming to the U.S., where he served as a chemical consultant and a laboratory director. In 1943, he became director of chemical research for Timber Engineering, a firm



Martin Levey

in Washington, D.C. Farber developed an early interest in history of chemistry and published a German text in the field in 1921. He continued to pursue this avocation throughout the remainder of his life, publishing numerous papers and several books, including a second history of chemistry, this one in English. His principal contribution was the editing of *Great Chemists*, a collection of biographies, partly selected from existing literature and partly written by selected contributors.

Martin Levey (1913-1970), recipient of the 1965 award, was born in Philadelphia and combined the study of chemistry and languages. He served in the Merchant Marine during World War II, then took an industrial position until he entered Dropsie College in 1949 to pursue the study of Semitic languages and the history of ancient and medieval science. Despite a doctorate in history of science, he found great difficulty in finding an academic position which permitted

him to pursue his talents. He ultimately obtained an appointment at SUNY in Albany, with an opportunity to create a department such as he desired. Levey published a treatise on Babylonian chemistry and technology in 1959 and up to the time of his unfortunate death in 1970 published nearly a dozen additional works, most of them translations from Middle Eastern Antiquity and the Middle Ages, dealing with mathematics, book production, perfumery, toxicology, medicine and chemistry. He had a great talent for combining archeology, exotic languages, and science.

The overall statistics for the first decade of the award reflect its diversity, in terms of both the recipients themselves and the nature of their contributions. Of the first ten recipients, five were in their seventies when they received the award, two were in their sixties, and three in their fifties. All but one (Armstrong) were formally trained as chemists at either the undergraduate or graduate level. Four held academic positions in chemistry, two were industrial chemists, two held academic positions in the history of science, one was a librarian, and one was an editor. Their contributions ranged from the writing of general histories of chemistry to the writing of biographies, the founding and editing of journals, and the assembling and maintenance of major library collections in the field.

Part III of the series, dealing with the second decade of the award, will appear in the next issue.

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*Dr. Aaron Ihde is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Chemistry of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706. A Past-Chair of the Division (1962-1964) and a winner of the Dexter Award (1968) himself, Dr. Ihde is perhaps best known for his classic text "The Development of Modern Chemistry", which has recently been reissued as a Dover paperback.*

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## BONES AND STONES

### The 250th Anniversary of the Saint Maurice Ironworks

*Fathi Habashi, Laval University*

On 20 August 1738, Pierre-Francois Olivier de Vezin, an iron master from France, who had come especially to New France in 1735 to operate the Forges de Saint-Maurice near Trois-Rivieres, Quebec, started the first successful iron making furnace in Canada. This event will be celebrated in Canada by a silver dollar that will be issued by the royal Mint in Ottawa in the summer of 1988.

The design of the dollar (see figure) will show a typical eighteenth century scene depicting two smiths with hammers raised, striking iron on an anvil. The base of the anvil will carry the date 1738 and the anvil itself will be adorned with a "fleur