

In It's Blood:

A Centennial History of the Division of the History of Chemistry

Introduction

The American Chemical Society was founded at a time when the history of chemistry was an integral part of both the teaching and practice of Chemistry in America (Chapter 2). When a large crowd gathered in Northumberland, Pennsylvania in 1874 to commemorate the discovery of oxygen by Joseph Priestley, the celebration was notable for the sense of the history of chemistry in all the world and its evolution in America (Chapter 3). Eventually, the history of chemistry was taught at places like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Boston University (Chapter 4). The Founding story of the Division of the History of Chemistry is beautifully told by Henry M. Leicester and is reproduced here for all to appreciate. It was originally published in *Industrial and Engineering Chemistry* (**43**, 1053 (1951)) (Chapter 7). The story features two chemical historians whose vision and effort resulted in the formation of a Section for the History of Chemistry and ultimately a Division: Edgar Fahs Smith (Chapter 5) and Charles A. Browne (Chapter 6).

Another Division founded at the same time and by the same people was Chemical Education (CHED) (Chapter 8). Many articles on the history of Chemistry have been published in the *Journal of Chemical Education*. The two sister Divisions have collaborated on a large number of initiatives and continue to complement one another.

The existence of a formal Division requires actual officers. While HIST is more than its governors, a presentation that focuses on these people is an important part of a Centennial history (Introduction, Chapter 9, GDP). A list of officers can be found on the HIST website, but is also reproduced in Chapter 9. During the 1920s, five people served as officers: Edgar Fahs Smith, Charles A. Browne, Lyman Newell, Frank B. Dains and Tenney Davis. Four of them have received detailed biographies in earlier chapters. In Chapter 10 a detailed biography of Frank B. Dains is presented. In the 1930s one new name appears: Mildred Grafflin. She served as the Secretary/Treasurer from 1935-1940. A full biography will be

34 presented in Chapter 11. Officers from the 1940s include James Couch, Ralph E.
35 Oesper, Harrison Hale, Henry M. Leicester and Sidney Edelstein. All five officers
36 will be memorialized in Chapter 12. The 1950s introduces three new faces:
37 Virginia Bartow, Eduard Farber and Wyndham D. Miles. They will be discussed
38 in Chapter 13. The 1960s were governed by Virgil R. Payne, Aaron Ihde, O.
39 Theodor Benfey, Martin Levey, Sister St. John Nepumocene, Melville Gorman and
40 Jack J. Bulloff (Chapter 14). The 1970s introduced many new officers: George B.
41 Kauffman, Desmond M.C. Reilly, June Z. Fullmer, Florence E. Wall, Peter
42 Oesper, David H. Wilcox, Jr., Robert M. Hawthorne, O. Bertrand Ramsay, Carl
43 Alper, Jane. A. Miller, Ned Heindel, and William Wiswesser (Chapter 15). Many
44 of these people are still active in HIST! The 1980s featured John Wotiz, Natalie
45 Foster, D. Stanley Tarbell, Tonya Koeppel, Leon Gortler, Sister Mary Virginia
46 Orna, Robert H. Goldsmith, Derek Davenport, James J. Bohning, William B.
47 Jensen, James Traynham, and Albert Kirsch (Chapter 16). The 1990s included
48 Jack Stocker, John Heitmann, Ben Chastain, Jeffrey Sturchio, Paul R. Jones,
49 Harold Goldwhite, Martin Saltzman, Vera Mainz, Joseph Lambert, and Stephen
50 Weininger (Chapter 17). The new millennium introduced Richard E. Rice, David
51 E. Lewis, Jeffrey I. Seeman, Roger Egolf, and Jan Hayes, (Chapter 18). And the
52 final group consists of E. Thomas Strom, Ned Heindel, Gary D. Patterson, Ronald
53 Brashear, Daniel Rabinovitch and Seth Rasmussen (Chapter 19). All the officers
54 are remembered, both photographically and biographically.

55
56 One of the primary reasons for the formation of a Division is the technical
57 programs at the national meetings. At its first “official” symposium in 1922 at
58 Birmingham eleven papers were presented to more than 100 attendees. In 1923 the
59 History of Chemistry Section helped celebrate the opening of the Sterling
60 Chemical Laboratory at Yale and Edgar Fahs Smith gave a plenary lecture on the
61 “History of Chemistry in America with Special Reference to Yale.” In addition to
62 the formal lectures, early meetings of the History Section featured a “Show and
63 Tell” session where members exhibited some of their prize artifacts. Early efforts
64 to found a Journal devoted entirely to history were ceded to a joint effort that
65 resulted in the *Journal of Chemical Education* in 1924. (A complete introduction
66 for these chapters (Chapter 21) will require access to all the records of HIST
67 symposia. This is in progress.)

68

69

70 In addition to papers presented at National ACS meetings, the HIST Division has
71 sponsored the publication of many books. A complete list of these books with
72 extensive discussion of their contents has been produced by Mary Virginia Orna
73 (Chapter 33).

74

75 There has always been a subgroup of the HIST Division that coupled their love of
76 history with their passion for stamps. John Sharkey will write a chapter (34) that
77 discusses the series of Presidential events at national meetings, complete with
78 appropriate stamps.

79

80 Eventually, the HIST Division decided to found its own Journal, *The Bulletin for*
81 *the History of Chemistry*. (Authors are solicited for this chapter (35), perhaps
82 Carmen.

83

84 Members of HIST have been especially entrepreneurial with regard to ways that
85 the history of chemistry can be celebrated. Jeffrey Seeman created the Citation for
86 Chemical Breakthroughs Award that acknowledges key publications and the
87 location of their authors. (Authors are solicited for this chapter (36) hopefully Jeff)

88

89 The Division also awards recognition to notable historians of Chemistry
90 throughout the world (The HIST Award). In addition, the best paper published in
91 the Bulletin over a three year rolling window is celebrated. (Authors are solicited
92 for this chapter (37))

93

94 One of the most exciting developments in the 21st century is the close collaboration
95 of the History of Chemistry Division with the publisher Springer. This is entirely
96 due to the efforts of Seth Rasmussen. (Hopefully Seth will write this chapter (38))

97

98 One of the organizations that has almost complete overlap of its members with
99 HIST is the Bolton Society, the worldwide organization of chemical bibliophiles
100 sponsored by the Heritage Council of the Science History Institute. In addition to
101 common interests, the Bolton Society has planned many symposia for HIST
102 meetings. (Perhaps John Sharkey and I can write this chapter (39).)

103

104 Another important international organization that has had strong ties to HIST is the
105 Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry(SHAC). (I will be glad to join
106 with Robert Anderson to write this chapter (40)).

107
108 The Center for the History of Chemistry was founded with substantial
109 encouragement and help from HIST. Ned Heindel was instrumental in making this
110 happen. This group eventually became the Chemical Heritage Foundation with a
111 campus at 315 Chestnut Street in Philadelphia. It now houses the world's best
112 Chemical library and an outstanding museum of Chemistry. The current
113 rebranding of the organization is the Science History Institute. HIST has been an
114 official Affiliate of the Heritage Council, an internal networking organization
115 within the Science History Institute since its formation, and has been a major force
116 in the history and development of the overall institution. (Authors are being
117 solicited for this chapter (41), but the Editor is glad to be part of the team.)

118
119 There may be many other topics that emerge as relevant to the Centennial History
120 of HIST. Authors are solicited to identify topics and to volunteer to write the
121 chapters. The Editor will help with each chapter, but authors are encourage to “tell
122 their own stories,” without interference from the Editor (Gary Patterson,
123 gp9a@andrew.cmu.edu, 412-480-0656).

124
125 The Introductory Chapter 1 will extend as new chapters are completed and further
126 information becomes available. It is intended as a “living” document. As each
127 chapter is completed and edited, it will be posted on the HIST website. All
128 members of HIST are then encouraged to read the drafts and send corrections and
129 suggestions to the Editor (Gary Patterson, gp9a@andrew.cmu.edu, 412-480-0656).
130 Authors of chapters will be given highest priority in determining the final form of
131 their chapters, but it is hoped that the collective effort will make the overall, huge,
132 document better. The total effort will become a part of the HIST website. This will
133 allow a much more thorough presentation of the history of HIST than a constrained
134 printed document. Opportunity to publish appropriate chapters in a wider array of
135 places can be discussed with the HIST EXEC.