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SCIENCE

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

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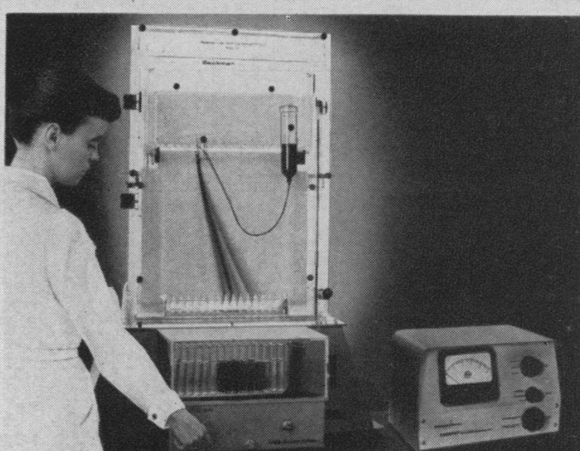

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Meetings

Chicago Academy of Sciences

It is significant of the rapid growth of our country that the Chicago Academy of Sciences, at the time of its founding in 1857, should have been known as "the first museum of the West." It is strange, indeed, to reflect that only 100 years ago Chicago was a sprawling pioneer community and that the academy was the first scholarly institution on the scene. Washington's Smithsonian had been founded only 11 years earlier, and through the years a traditional bond has existed between the two. Robert Kennicott, first director of the academy, was a young protégé of Spencer Fullerton Baird, assistant secretary of the Smithsonian in those days. It was the young Kennicott whose scientific reports on Russian Alaska, as leader of the Overland Telegraph Expedition, made the United States aware of the value of this vast territory. When the project to link Europe to North America via Bering Strait was terminated by the successful laying of the Atlantic cable, the scientific results of the Kennicott expeditions were the only tangible results of the giant undertaking. But they influenced our Government to purchase Alaska.

Early sites of the academy were twice destroyed by fire, the last time by the great Chicago fire of 1871. The present building in Lincoln Park was built in 1893 at a cost of $100,000, through the generosity of Matthew Laflin, who contributed $75,000, and the commissioners of Lincoln Park, who contributed $25,000. The academy has received major bequests from several others—$100,000 from W. Moses Wilner, $140,225 from Melissa Dickinson, $150,000 from Albert Dickinson, and $26,843 from Elsie S. Sandquist.

Founded for the "increase and diffusion of scientific knowledge," the academy has steadfastly pursued this goal. But science has its vogues, even as the world of fashion. In 1857 science was acquisitive. It was a time for discovery and classification of animals and plants, and in the early academy *Transactions* such work was published and broadcast to the scientific world. So, too, in its present *Bulletin, Special Publications,* and *Natural History Miscellanea,* the academy has ranged the whole wide field of science to continue the "increase and diffusion" of such knowledge. In an old institution like this you may read history off the library shelves or herbarium sheets. Here is a copy of Dana's *System of Mineralogy,* published in 1868; here a collection of plants made west of the 100th meridian by Palmer and Wolf in 1868.

Now the vogue is changing. The need for taxonomy is still as acute as ever in entomology and invertebrate classification but less urgent for higher vertebrates. There is time to investigate the biological interrelationships of animals and plants in studies of ecology and parasitology. Joseph Camin, staff acarologist, has a three-year grant from the National Institutes of Health to study mite-borne diseases and the genetics of the ability of mites to transmit blood diseases of vertebrates. The academy director concerns himself with bird physiology and the influence of the ice age on bird speciation and present migration routes.

But the academy feels most strongly its responsibility to diffuse knowledge to the public. At a time when science education is actually unpopular in the schools and scientists are regarded variously as unfeeling ascetics and dangerous crackpots, our role should be to correct misconceptions. Obviously, students come by such ideas via their teachers, and the need for good science teachers is therefore as great as that for well-informed students. Badly needed, too, is a respect for scholarly accomplishment to replace the present passion for mediocrity among students and even professional men. To

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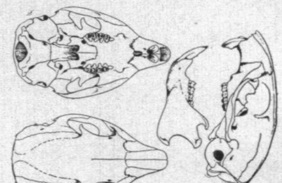

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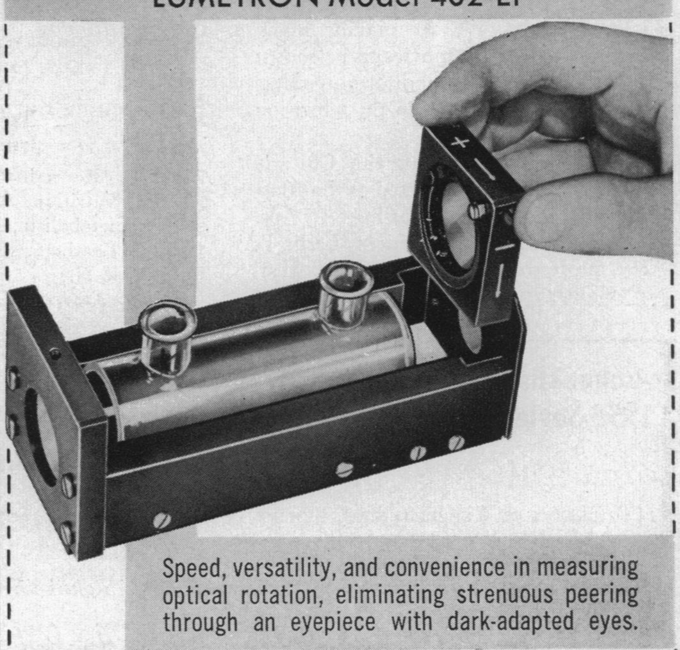

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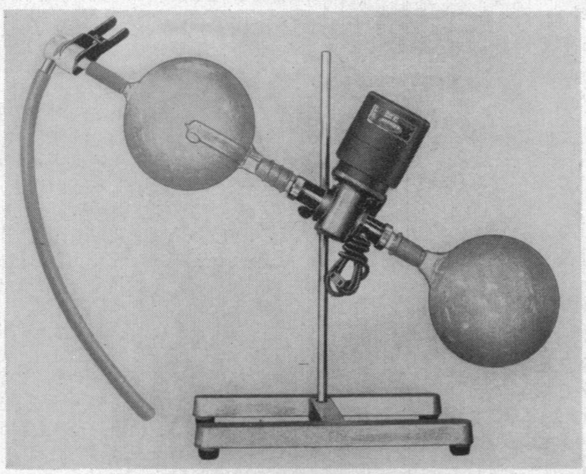

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