

Ronald & Marlene Park Family collection, 1903-1944

MS 2

Dr. Edwin A. Mirand Library Archives
Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center

Creator: Ronald & Marlene Park

Abstract: Microscope with accessories, manual, and accompanying documents

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Danielle Glynn, 2023

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Biographical Note / Historical Note / Chronology:

From *Three American Microscope Builders* by American Optical Company, 1945:
“A number of physicians were interested in the new company. Dr. Roswell Park, an eminent Buffalo surgeon, was president of the Buffalo Museum of Science, became Secretary and Treasurer of the Spencer Lens Company shortly before Herbert R. Spencer died.”

From [Reichert Ametek](#):

“Early History

Around 1826 William Beecher (1805-1893) opened a modest jewelry store in Southbridge, Massachusetts. Beecher soon discovered his taste for invention sparked an interest in making steel spectacle frames. In 1843 Beecher produced the first steel, and gold spectacles made in America using machinery he invented. He then began manufacturing these frames on a small scale with three assistants, one of whom was Robert H. Cole who later became a partner and eventually, head of the business upon Beecher's retirement in 1862. Two years later, George W. Wells arrived in Southbridge as a young man and obtained work in this optical shop. Wells' vision and industriousness quickly made a positive impact and in 1869, with his associates, he formed the American Optical Company (AO) with Mr. Cole as President. This began a long line of notable developments and firsts, including introduction of the first rimless spectacles, adoption of the dioptric system of lens power, manufacture of toric lenses used for correction of astigmatism, and the acceptance of AO's system of lens power by the U.S. Bureau of Standards, in 1898. With the introduction of the Lensometer® in 1921, AO revolutionized the eyecare industry providing the first means to measure spectacle power. In addition to the introduction of the Lensometer were the Ophthalmoscope, the improved Effective Power Phoropter®, and the Laser Photocoagulator.

Continued Innovation

During war periods, AO manufactured special gun sights, bombsight lenses, telescopes, periscopes, binoculars, machine gun-sights, tank periscopes, sniper scopes; and developed and equipped base optical mobile units for expeditionary forces into Europe toward the end of the Second World War. They also provided 14 million prescription eyeglasses to the military, while continuing to fill civilian orders.

Branching out into diagnostic instruments AO again revolutionized the industry when Dr. Bernard Grolman developed the Non-Contact Air Puff Tonometer. Called the NCT I, it was first introduced at the World's Fair in 1972, where it was overwhelmingly embraced. At the time the law did not permit someone without a medical degree to administer topical anesthetics, so optometrists were unable to perform Goldmann tonometry (the only method at the time) which required anesthetizing the eye. The NCT I finally gave optometrists the ability to measure eye pressure without anesthetic. The instrument became an immediate success.

Our Buffalo Connection

In 1935 American Optical purchased the Spencer Lens Company, located in Buffalo, New York. Spencer Lens was founded in 1895 by Herbert Spencer as Superintendent and optical expert, with eminent Buffalo surgeon Dr. Roswell Park, as President. The company was a manufacturer of high quality microscopes, and is considered the first American microscope maker. By 1938 the Spencer plant had begun manufacturing ophthalmic instruments, and a new factory was constructed on Eggert Road in Buffalo.

In 1945 the name Spencer Lens Company was changed to American Optical Scientific Instrument Division, and in 1950 AO relocated their Southbridge, MA ophthalmic instrument manufacturing to the Buffalo facility. This was due in part to a flood that wiped out the manufacturing plant in Southbridge. At this time AO chairs and stands were produced by Archer Manufacturing Company, of Rochester, NY. Archer was acquired by AO in 1952 and then in

1967 AO was purchased by Warner Lambert Pharmaceutical. In 1980 the Rochester facility was closed, and the manufacture of chair and stands was moved to Buffalo, NY. Over the next two decades the company changed hands several times, carrying the names: Cambridge Instruments, Reichert-Jung, Inc., and Leica Microsystems. Finally, in December of 2002, a management buyout in collaboration with Summer Street Capital Partners of Buffalo, NY, occurred, and Reichert, Inc. was formed. In October 2011, Reichert Technologies® joined the Ultra Precision Technologies Division of AMETEK, Inc., a U.S. company and leading global manufacturer of electronic instruments and electro-mechanical devices. This strategic partnership has positioned Reichert to continue the design and manufacture of groundbreaking products while maintaining its rapid growth as a leader in the ophthalmic industry.

Today

Reichert carries on the traditions of AO, continuing to innovate ground-breaking instruments such as the Ocular Response Analyzer®, the only instrument capable of measuring the bio-mechanical properties of the eye, developed by Reichert's own David Luce, Ph.D. Reichert also prides itself on providing excellent, high-quality, traditional lane equipment including: chairs, stands, slit-lamps, lensmeters, auto-refractor/keratometers, acuity systems, and more.”

Spencer Lens Company was located at 367-373 Seventh St., Buffalo, NY.

Scope and Content Note:

Collection consists of Spencer Lens Company (Buffalo, NY) monocular microscope, microscope accessories, a manual for operating a Spencer Lens Company microscope (1935), a letter from Spencer Lens Company (1903), and *Three American Microscope Builders* (American Optical Company, 1944).

Arrangement:

Collection is arranged in three boxes: Box 1 holds the microscope, Box 2 holds the accessories and manual, and Box 3 holds the accompanying documents.

Container List

Box I. Spencer Lens Company monocular microscope, circa 1903

Scope and Content: Brass body tube, 3 objectives, metal staging clips, flat base, “Spencer Lens Co Buffalo, N.Y.” engraved on base, “4376” engraved on base.

Box II. Microscope accessories, circa 1903-1935

Scope and Content: Spencer Lens Company microscope manual (1935), Spencer Lens Company homopolymer immersion oil, mirror fork and mirror, 5 objectives and their cases.

Box III. Accompanying documents, 1903-1944

Scope and Content: "Three American Microscope Builders" by American Optical Company (1944), letter from Spencer Lens Company to Dr. M. J. Rosenau with Roswell Park listed in letterhead (27 Apr 1903).

Search Terms

Contributors:

Spencer Lens Company
American Optical Company

Subject terms:

Microscope and microscopy
Microscope industry
Microscopes—1900-1910

Genre terms:

microscopes
business letters
manuals (instructional material)