

NIH History Highlights

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**The National Institutes of Health
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Office of NIH History Staff

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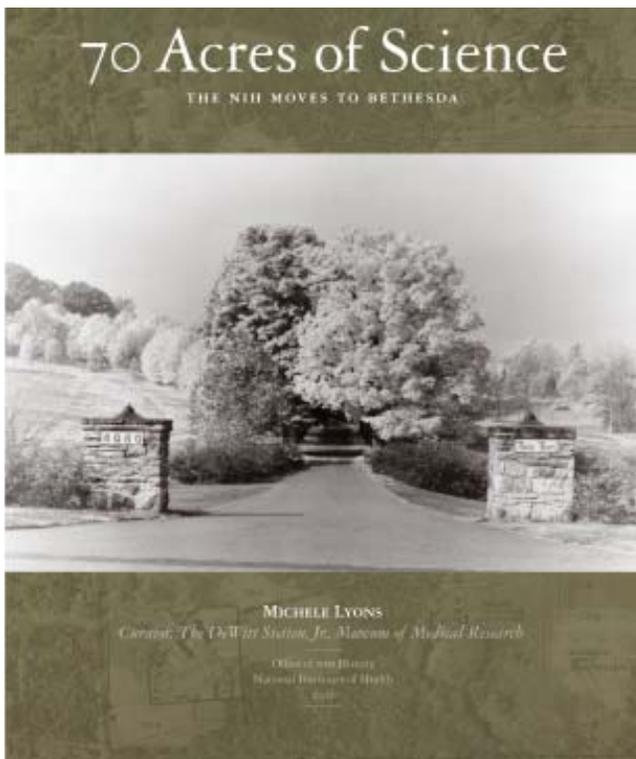
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Table of Contents

Director's Welcome	2
New Volunteer and Fellow.....	3
Research Notes	4
Fall Seminars.....	5
Now Online	6
Spectrometer on Loan to NLM....	7
Visitor Center at RML.....	8



This e-book, covering the years of the NIH's move to Bethesda, is a new addition to the Office of NIH History website (See page 6 for more).

Director's Welcome



As many of you know, the last several months have seen major changes in the Office of NIH History. Dr. Victoria Harden, the NIH Historian, retired after almost twenty years as the founding director, builder, and sustainer of the office's activities.

She was uniquely qualified to implement Dr. DeWitt Stetten, Jr.'s vision, first articulated in the early 1980s, for the NIH to have an academic program to collect and analyze the records and historical artifacts of this agency. The NIH's role as both a funding source and a center for carrying out biomedical research was becoming more and more appreciated and Dr. Stetten realized that we must not lose the record of its accomplishments. Dr. Harden, who had studied and published several books about NIH history in her graduate and post-graduate training, was the ideal person to carry out this plan for archiving and curating these items. She then went on to build an office to include rigorous scholarly work, including her own scholarship but adding also the Stetten fellowship program, publications, exhibits, symposia, and a lecture series.

To honor Dr. Harden upon her retirement, a two-day symposium "Biomedicine in the Twentieth Century: Practices, Policies, and Politics" was held in December 2005, featuring presentations by many outstanding biomedical history scholars. Publication of the text of this symposium is planned. A second major change since January 2006 has been its administrative move within the Office of the Director of NIH from the Office of Communications and Public Liaison to the Office of

the Director of Intramural Research, under Dr. Michael Gottesman. This change will allow the program to more easily use the resources of the NIH campus, and the Office will continue to have responsibility for archiving and analyzing extramural NIH history, as well as that of the intramural program.

At present, plans are underway to begin the recruitment process for a new Historian. Discussions have been held within the Office of the NIH Director, with the Scientific Directors of the Institutes, and with the Office's own Advisory Committee to identify ways in which the history program may evolve to meet the changing nature of NIH in the coming decades. Closer relations with the NIH Library, the National Library of Medicine, and other relevant organizations are being developed. New projects, such as a publication series on biomedical research history, are also being discussed.

Meanwhile, allow me to introduce myself and lay out the reasons for my current service as Acting Director. I was fortunate to have been part of the small group that Dr. Stetten assembled in the early 1980s to plan what officially became the Museum and History Office in 1986 and to have chaired its Advisory Committee for more than a decade. Although not a historian by training, I have long believed that policy can only be made well by those who understand the past. In a period in which medical research is subject to rapidly increasing perturbations, a solid understanding of its foundation is ever more critical. Any thoughts or comments that readers may have about the future of the history program would be greatly appreciated.

Alan N. Schechter, M.D.
Acting Director, Office of NIH History
Chief, Molecular Medicine Branch, NIDDK

New Volunteer

The Office of NIH History would like to welcome our new volunteer, Dr. Dan Lednicer, to the staff. Dr. Lednicer comes to us with a rich background in science and a long-held interest in history: he was a research chemist at the NCI after running commercial drug development programs at Mead Johnson & Co. and Upjohn (among other companies). He has also volunteered for many years at the National Air and Space Museum and the National Building Museum. Dr. Lednicer holds 69 patents and has written numerous articles and books on subjects ranging from history to organic chemistry and drug synthesis. His most recent book, *New Drug Discovery and Development*, is currently in press with John Wiley & Sons. This book discusses the development of different kinds of drugs including antibiotics, antivirals, antihypertensive agents, steroids, and histamines. In addition to all of this, he is an accomplished artist of miniatures (right), having held several shows and won awards for his work.



Dr. Lednicer is currently working through our backlog of photographs to scan and catalogue them. He also helps identify and research objects for the Museum's collections and is embarking on a project to write brief biographical sketches of selected NIH scientists for our website. In the future, the office hopes to put him to further use on projects taking advantage of his scientific and museum background.

Stetten Fellow, 2007-2008

This year, the Fellowship Committee has awarded the DeWitt Stetten, Jr. Memorial Fellowship in the History of Biomedical Sciences and Technology to Joseph A. November. November, who will receive his Ph.D. degree from Princeton University, will defer his fellowship for a year in order to commence a teaching position at the University of South Carolina. When he arrives on campus next summer, Dr. November plans to continue his research in the history of computing. His project is titled: "Planting the Seeds: How the NIH Cultivated Biomedical Computing." He will be the first Stetten Fellow to be sponsored by the Center for Information Technology.

Applications for the Stetten Fellowship can be found on our website at: <http://www.history.nih.gov/01Docs/grants/4005form.htm>. The deadline is December 15.

Research Notes

Leo Slater, a Stetten Fellow with the Office of NIH History, spoke recently with Drs. McWilson Warren and William Chin as part of his work on the history of the post-World War II malaria program at NIH. Dr. Slater's research is sponsored by NIAID. Oral history is an important way to preserve the NIH's past, especially the memories and autobiographies of scientists and clinicians.

Interviews with Drs. Warren and Chin will help tell the story of the malaria work done in the 1950s and 1960s, wide-ranging research that led scientists from mental hospitals in the U.S. to jungles in Southeast Asia. Reading annual reports of laboratories and other sources can be helpful, but the people who were actually there can add much to the discussion. Drs. Warren and Chin had long histories with the NIAID. For example, even before receiving his doctorate (Rice University, 1957), **Dr. Warren** worked as a technician in an NIAID laboratory in Columbia, South Carolina. NIAID had a center there for the study of human malarias and scientists worked in association with the South Carolina state mental hospital on the use of malaria in the treatment of neurosyphilis. Because giving the patients high fevers was considered a form of therapy for neurosyphilis, scientists could study the effects of malaria on the human body in a controlled setting.



Dr. Warren posed with a monkey in Dacca, East Pakistan (now Dhaka, Bangladesh) c. 1963.

In the early 1960s, Dr. Warren joined the USPHS and went to Kuala Lumpur, Malaya (now Malaysia), with Dr. Don Eyles to study the simian malarias and their potential to jump across species into humans. This program was conceived and managed by Dr. G. Robert Coatney of NIAID's Laboratory for Parasite Chemotherapy (LPC). Dr. Warren described the excitement of the program: "Don Eyles, arguably, was the most accomplished, the most brilliant scientist/thinker that I ever had the opportunity to be around. We were committed to finding out about monkey malaria. Nothing was known about the epidemiology or the variety of these parasites... There was nothing that we could learn in the jungles of South

East Asia that would not be pertinent to a better understanding of monkey malaria. Parasitology, entomology, mammology, and botany were all subject areas where expertise was needed... Every day was new and special." Tragically Dr. Eyles died as he was boarding a ship in Penang harbor for his return trip. Dr. Warren, however, returned to the United States and later worked in LPC programs in Chamblee, Georgia, and at the NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland.

Dr. Chin was also a USPHS officer. His primary connection to NIAID and LPC was during his time at NIH's Unit on Malaria during the late 1960s. He worked for Dr. Coatney at the

Atlanta Federal Penitentiary where they conducted malaria research using prisoner volunteers. He described the research in Atlanta this way: “The work we were doing was two-fold. One, we were screening parasites for their response to various antimalarial drugs. When I first went there, most of the parasites were sensitive to chloroquine, so there was a minimum of drug research. The other part was to try to infect volunteers with various monkey malarias. This was a subject of Dr. Coatney’s keenest interest—and not just academic interest. He was the one—probably more than anyone else—who made monkey malaria a very prominent subject in terms of malariology. He and his colleagues probably found and identified more new species of monkey malaria than any other group. The next question was would these monkey malarias infect man? This was during the malaria eradication era. Dr. Coatney was concerned that we (the World Health Organization’s malaria eradication program) could not be successful in eradicating malaria, if monkey malaria could make the jump into man. . . . So that was his focus. We had these two areas: drug evaluation and monkey malaria.” During Dr. Coatney’s tenure, from World War II through his retirement in the 1970s, the LPC was at the forefront of malaria drug research.

These brief excerpts of much longer interviews underscore the importance of oral histories to understanding the human stories of scientific research. For this project, the oral histories will form part of a website on the history of malaria research at NIH field stations and laboratories. The web exhibit will cover the history of a number of field stations and laboratories: two associated with state mental hospitals in Columbia, South Carolina, and Milledgeville, Georgia; one that dealt with malaria biology and simian malaria in Memphis, Tennessee; the Unit on Malaria at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary; and the Far East Research Project on simian

malaria as a zoonosis, based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya. The site, to appear in the next year on our website, www.history.nih.gov, will include photographs and links to articles written by the scientific groups under discussion.

FALL BRHIG SEMINARS

The Office of NIH History sponsors a monthly seminar series, the Biomedical Research History Interest Group (BRHIG). This fall the speakers will include:

Mr. Martyn Pickersgill, a Ph.D. candidate of the University of Nottingham, U.K., a recipient of the Pisano Travel Grant, will give a BRHIG talk on “neuroscience, clinical practice and the reconstruction of personality disorder” on (Tuesday, September 26, 1:00 pm)

Dr. Toine Pieters, Department of Metamedica (Medical Humanities), Vrije Universiteit Medisch Centrum (Amsterdam, NL), will present a talk entitled: "Interferon and the Miracle Drug Phenomenon: Patterns and Mechanisms of Hype Cycles in Medicine." (Tuesday, November 14, 1:00 pm)

Dr. Carl F. Craver, Philosophy-Neuroscience-Psychology Program, Washington University in St. Louis, will present a talk on his research on the work of the late NIH Nobel Laureate Julius Axelrod in the fall, time and date TBA.

For more information call **(301) 496-6610** or go to **www.history.nih.gov** and click on "BRHIG."

Now Online: *70 Acres of Science: The National Institute of Health Moves to Bethesda*

A new e-book has been posted on our website. Researched and written by curator Michele Lyons, the book discusses: the Wilson family's donation of land in Bethesda; the growth of the NIH during the 1930s; the construction of the first six buildings; President Roosevelt's dedication of the new campus; the research being pursued by NIH scientists at the time; and memories of long-term staff members. In addition, there are sections devoted to photographs of the Wilson estate, construction of the buildings, the dedication ceremony, and the scientists of the NIH. Special sections take a closer look at the correspondence between the Wilson family and government officials; explore the details of construction through extant documents; explain the use of scientific instruments of the 1930s; and focus on newspaper articles written about the "G-Men of Science." Readers will also find an audio clip of Roosevelt's dedication speech and many helpful links.

The website's education components fulfil the Maryland State Curriculum requirements for history and science. The first lesson plan focuses on dental researcher H. Trendley Dean's studies of mottled enamel, which led to the addition of fluoride to many municipal water supplies. The lesson presents the scientific basis for fluoridation and covers the subsequent controversies about the practice. The second lesson plan focuses on public health education—a topic avidly pursued by NIH Director Lewis Thompson and Surgeon General Thomas Parran in

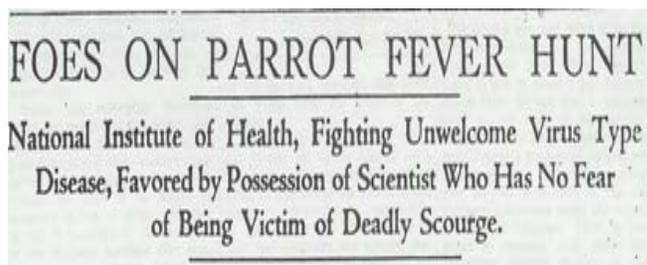
the 1930s and 1940s. This lesson asks students to analyze the public health education initiatives taken in the 1930s and compare them to the campaigns today both in terms of content and technique. One of the activities asks students to design their own public health campaign for an issue important to them.

Lyons used many sources in her research and uncovered interesting stories. For example: Lewis R. Thompson had a vision for a new campus long before he secured the Wilsons' donation of the land. Helen and Luke Wilson

did not decide to give the land to the NIH until March of 1935, yet in November 1934, Thompson had already asked that appropriations for new NIH buildings be switched to the Bethesda site. Thompson made every effort to cultivate the goodwill of the Wilsons, who took a long time to come around to the idea of giving their land to

the NIH. Thompson also courted the neighbors, taking them on tours of the proposed campus and attending local protest meetings to argue his case. He worked with the Wilsons on wording the deed of gift and when the inevitable governmental delays occurred, he assured them that "if lawyers were doctors all the patients would be dead before the cure arrived." Thompson replaced George McCoy as director of the NIH in 1937, nearly two years after the Wilsons made their donation.

Other sources used in creating the e-book included several boxes of original construction documents and photographs of Buildings 1-6 and PHS officers' housing. These records included architectural drawings, pay



This article by Lucy Salamonaca appeared in the Washington Star in 1937. It was part of a series called "The G-Men of Science".

receipts, letters, accident reports, and advertisements. Also, in 1937 and 1938, the news outlet "Science Service" took a series of photographs of NIH scientists at work which Lyons used in her research to help understand the scientific progress being made at the agency. She also consulted annual reports, scientific papers, and the Stetten Museum's collection of scientific instruments used at the NIH in the 1930s and 1940s. News articles from the *Washington Star* and the *Washington Post* followed the development of the Bethesda campus and helped dramatize the events that took place over half a century ago, as the NIH made Bethesda its home.

70 Acres of Science: The National Institute of Health Moves to Bethesda is now available online at <http://history.nih.gov/01Docs/historical/documents/70AcresofScienceFeb15.pdf>



Helen Wilson posed in a construction vehicle during dedication ceremonies at the Bethesda campus, 1938.

Object Loaned to National Library of Medicine

A Stetten Museum object is now on display in the

NLM exhibit "Visible Proofs: Forensic Views of the Body."

The exhibit focuses on the science involved in forensic medicine from the 17th century to today—a topic made popular by several current television shows such as *CSI*. The Beckman DU

spectrophotometer was used in forensics for tasks such as testing blood stains and has been called one of the most important research instruments ever developed. Designed by Arnold O. Beckman in the early 1940s, initially to identify and

measure vitamins in food, the DU was the first

inexpensive, mass produced, and accurate

spectrophotometer. It was also one of the first "black box" instruments, where the workings of the instrument are hidden from view and it is not necessary for a scientist to understand the technology to get accurate results. For more about the DU

spectrophotometer, visit the NLM's virtual exhibit at

www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/visibleproofs/galleries/

[technologies/spectral_image\)5.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/visibleproofs/galleries/technologies/spectral_image)5.html)



The Stetten Museum's DU Spectrometer

New NIAID Visitor Center in Montana

In February, NIAID's Rocky Mountain Laboratories (RML), located in Hamilton, Montana, opened a 3,500-square-foot visitor center next to the main entrance of the facility. The center will contain rotating exhibits exploring the RML's research work. The

using a special microscope to improve the detail, were used to help identify the many different species of tick in the area. Dr. Victoria Harden, the former director of the Office of NIH History, had collected the paintings and brought them to Bethesda during her research on

RMSF in the 1980s, because at the time there was nowhere to store the items in Montana. In addition, the Stetten Museum loaned the new visitor center two microscopes dating from about 1910 which will serve as examples of the kind of microscopes that RML scientists used.



opening exhibit is on tick research, with a special focus on scientists' work on Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF) which led to the opening of the laboratory over a century ago. A video highlights the work done by Dr. Howard T. Ricketts on RMSF and by Dr. Wily Burgdorfer on Lyme disease.

Stetten Museum curator Michele Lyons consulted with the RML staff on the exhibit and loaned the center six objects, including four paintings by RML medical artist Tom J. Moore. Moore's paintings of ticks, completed

Above: visitors browsed the new exhibits at the Rocky Mountain Laboratories visitor center earlier this year.

Past copies of *NIH History Highlights* are available at: <http://history.nih.gov/about/index.html>.

To subscribe: send an email with "subscribe" as the subject to Sarah Leavitt at: leavitts@mail.nih.gov