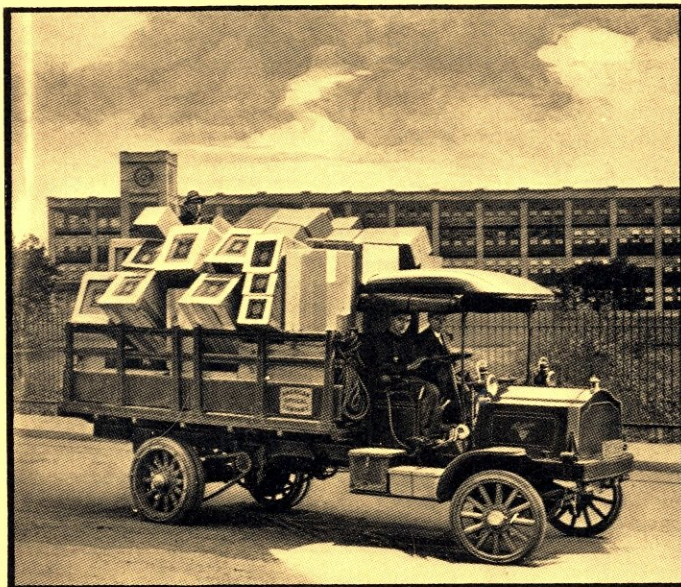


**AO**<sup>®</sup>  
American  
Optical



*Welcome to the Opening of the*  
**AMERICAN OPTICAL MUSEUM**

The opening of this museum on June 18, 1983, commemorates the 150th year of spectacle business for this company and the optical goods and artifacts pertaining to the history of American Optical. There are over 3,000 antique spectacle frames in the collection, of which, 600 are on display.

As you enter the museum to the right, walk straight ahead, and you will find a jeweler/optician display as it would have been seen at the turn of the century. Paintings, maps, and photos decorate the wall with memories of early times. An early lens display, personally built by one of the founders of American Optical, is next. Under the first fire alarm to be installed in Southbridge are early frame and lens manufacturing equipment. Push the button and watch the old "flat belt" machine come to life.

Along the next wall to the left is the major founder of American Optical, George Washington Wells, whose creativity, inventions, and good business sense was the primary reason for rapid growth of the business, originally owned by William Beecher. By 1869, these many innovations and advancements in manufacture allowed American Optical to become the center for spectacle making in the world. Further along are original journals dating back to 1843; early advertising and magazines published by the Company and early ophthalmic equipment.

Turn back and walk around the center display cases or look at visiting collections, early lenses and the famous Schiaparelli frame, containing 201 diamonds. Other famous A.O. products, as well as unusual frames and "findings" can also be seen in this area.

Along the opposing walls is the frame collection with early spectacle cases. Area flood pictures; A.O. buildings through 150 years; early safety goggles; other optical company catalogs; motorizing goggles; the Wells family; famous AO people, as well as the employees who worked here through the years, without whom none of this would have been possible.

Overhead are two 35mm projectors, bringing you information about other aspects of American Optical. By the column in the center of the room are

photographic replicas of various books, A.O. newspapers and catalogs for your perusal. While you peruse, you can listen to the oral history playing softly in the background. If you are from the area, you are sure to recognize Seaver Rice, Ruth Wells, and others.

Please exit through the rear door and you will see our traveling exhibit which is used for optical conventions and shows. Continuing along the hall to the left, you will see some of the newer products offered by American Optical.

As you turn left again and pass through the Reception Room, you will see the portrait of George B. Wells, the grandson of George W. Wells and last family president.

Before you leave, be sure to get your former "A.O. 1912" official company seal stamped on your brochure. This was the original seal for all company documents.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit, and welcome you to return. We are open Saturdays from 12:00 Noon to 4:00 p.m. through October 15. There will be no admission charge during this time.

Thank you, on behalf of the volunteers who made this museum possible: (in alphabetical order) Terri Atkins, Marge Breen, Dave Butler, John Mikolajczak, Brad Noble, Adeline Perry, Sue Phifer, Celine Santelli, Anne Tetreault, Chris Waldron, Ruth Wells, John Young.