CENTENARIES

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Nicoll, Whitlock (1786–1838)

WHITLOCK NICOLL, a British physician, was born at Treddington, Worcestershire, in 1786. His father who was rector of the parish died when Whitlock was but two years. He was educated by his uncle. He took his M.D. degree May 17, 1816 and became an extra-licentiate of the College of Physicians, London.

His Publications

He became a regular contributor to the *London medical repository* in 1819. His first book entitled *Tentamen nosologicums* classified diseases into (1) febres, (2) neuroses and (3) cachexiæ. In his *History of human economy* (1819) he developed a physiological approach to clinical medicine. *Primary elements of disordered circulation of the blood* (1819), *General elements of pathology* (1820), and *Practical remarks on the disordered states of the cerebral structures in infants* (1821) were his other books. Three of his papers on defective vision attracted some attention in his days.

His Honours

He became a member of the Royal Irish Academy in 1821 and was elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1830.

After successful practice in London for about twelve years, he retired in 1835 and died December 3, 1838.

Overton, John (1764–1838)

JOHN OVERTON, a British writer on chronology, was born at Thetford, Lincolnshire in 1764. He got appointed in the excise.

Interest in Astronomy

He had a strong liking for astronomy. He constructed his own telescopes for his observations. His interest swerved to biblical chronology by about 1817 when he published the *Geneology of Christ with a new system of sacred chronology and the true meaning of the weeks in Daniel.* 2 V. In 1820 he brought out his *Books of Genesis and Daniel (in connection with modern astronomy), etc.* Two other books of his on related topics were *The chronology of the apocalypse investigated and defended* (1822) and *Strictures on Dr. Chalmers's discourse on astronomy* (1823).

Overton died at Chelsea December 1, 1838.

Hunt, Robert Woolston (1838–1923)

ROBERT WOOLSTON HUNT, an American metallurgist, was born at Fallingston, Bucks County, December 9, 1838. Having served in his father's drugstore for some time, he found employment for several years in an iron rolling mill.

First Analytical Laboratory

Having taken a course in analytical chemistry, he established in 1860 the first analytical laboratory as an integral part of an iron works at the plant of Canbrie Iron Co.

Bessemer Process

In 1865 this Company sent him to their plant at Wyandotte, Michigan where experiments were being made with the Bessemer Steel Process. In 1867 Hunt rolled for the Pennsylvania Railroad with Bessemer steel from the Pennsylvania Steel Company, the first commercial order for steel rails. From 1871 to 1888 he was in charge of Bessemer steel plants in several companies, until he established at Chicago the firm of Robert W. Hunt & Company. His *History of the Bessemer manufacture in America* published in the *Transactions* (1877) of the American Institute of Mining Engineers is an authoritative contribution.

Rails

He invented the very widely adopted rail mills. He was Secretary of the American Society of Civil Engineers which designed the rail section bearing the Society's name. In 1921 he proposed a new rail section and the nick-and-break test for soundness of each ingot.

His Honours

In 1912 he was awarded the John Fritz Medal and in 1923 the Washington Award. There have been established in his memory the Robert W. Hunt Medal and the Robert W. Hunt Prize awarded annually by the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers.

Hunt died at Chicago July 11, 1923.

Burnham, Sherburne Wesley (1838–1921)

S. W. BURNHAM an American Astronomer was born at Thatford, Vermont, December 12, 1838. Having served in the army during the Civil War, he practised shorthand by himself and acted as official court reporter at Chicago for over twenty years. Though his days were fully occupied in taking down the court reports and writing them out in long hand, his tireless energy was such that he would carry out a full programme of astronomical observations at night. He worked at the Lick Observatory from 1888 to 1892 and was the first senior astronomer at the Yerkes Observatory from 1897 to 1914.

How He turned to Astronomy

When he was shorthand reporter at New Orleans, one afternoon as he was strolling along the street he heard a book auctioneer crying Burritt's *Geography of the heavens*. He bid for the book which was knocked down to him. On examining it he found it contained a chart of the sidereal heavens. In these he soon became interested and he bought a small telescope. By 1886 he got a better instrument and he also came in possession of Webb's *Celestial objects for common telescopes*. This determined his future line of work.

Double Stars

His chief fame rests on his work on double stars. It was then generally supposed that the Herschels had left no more double stars to be found. But Burnham's keen eye detected many stars with only a small fraction of a second of arc. His observations which were of the highest accuracy were made with great rapidity. He is said to have measured as many as one hundred double stars in one night. The total number of stars listed by him is 1,340.

His Publications

His results were published from time to time in several periodicals, the *Monthly notices* and the *Astronomische Nachrichtem* being the chief of them. But the most famous of his works is the *General catalogue of double stars within* 120° *of the north pole* 2 V. (1906).

History of the Catalogue

This *General catalogue* has a very interesting history, which is best told in the author's own words: "This catalogue in its first form was the result of my own needs soon after acquiring the six-inch Clerk refractor in 1870. From the beginning that instrument was devoted almost entirely to the observation of double stars. Objects were constantly found which could not be identified in any of the books....At that time there were but few books in Chicago bearing upon the subject of double stars....At that time to make a complete catalogue of the then known double stars, it was necessary to first make pen copies of nearly everything required for this purpose. These were secured by visiting libraries of the naval and other observatories and by borrowing books from various quarters. In this laborious way manuscript copies were acquired of the material parts of nearly all publications relating to double stars.... The manuscript general catalogue was kept continuously posted to date by the addition of all new stars and new measures from current publications. In order to make room for this new material a second manuscript edition became necessary and still later a third."

This went on till 1905 when the then newly established Carnegie Institute of Washington undertook to publish the *General catalogue* as the fifth of its publications. The book gives full data of about 13,665 double stars.

Burnham died at Chicago March 11, 1921.