

# HOW GLASSES CAUGHT A KILLER AND OTHER STORIES OF HOW OPTICS CHANGED THE WORLD

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## ***How Glasses Caught a Killer and Other Stories of How Optics Changed the World, Second Edition.***

David Baker. United Kingdom: FeedARead.com Publishing, 2016.

This book offers a collection of short articles on events or stories that relate in some way to ophthalmic optics or vision science. The articles, which appeared originally in *Optician* magazine, published in the United Kingdom, are each three to five pages long, and are grouped into four categories: War and Conflict (8 entries), Art, Culture and Philosophy (10 entries), People and Technology (23 entries), and Sport and Miscellany (8 entries).

The title of the book comes from the story of a famous 1924 murder case in Chicago in which one of the perpetrators was identified because a pair of his spectacles had been left at the crime scene. The investigators were able to identify the owner of the spectacles because they had an unusual hinge which was sold at only one Chicago outlet.

The book contains a wide variety of stories. One relates how the plastic resin used for various components of bombers in World War II became the plastic material for CR39 plastic spectacle lenses. Another entry tells about the Sherlock Holmes story "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez," written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who was trained in ophthalmology but turned to writing instead.

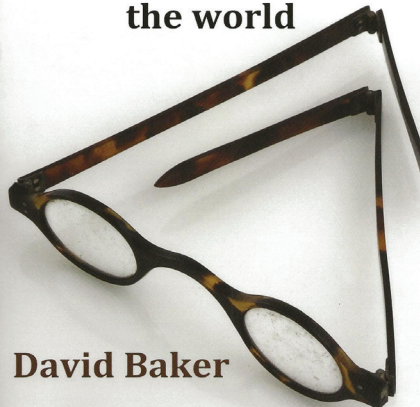
The author notes that one biographer of the famous philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) felt that Spinoza was more serious about lens making than many writers presume. Spinoza made telescopes and microscopes and owned two books on glass cutting and optics. The author speculated that Spinoza may have had a silicosis from many years of breathing glass dust which in turn may have contributed to his early demise from tuberculosis.

One of the articles in the book discusses instances in which vision conditions or eye care practitioners were portrayed in movies or television. I learned that an optometrist is the hero of a 1993 TV movie, "Four Eyes and Six Guns." I suspect that the movie may have been comedic from the description of the plot as the optometrist finds that Wyatt Earp is myopic.

It was interesting to learn that Alexander Graham Bell was ahead of his time in having four patents for a photophone using light to conduct sound. There are stories of many well-known persons in optics and science, such as Thomas Young, Benjamin Franklin, and Michael Faraday, but there are as many about obscure but interesting personalities.

The author of this book is a British optometrist. The book makes for very interesting light reading. Readers who might want to do some follow-up reading on some of the topics in the book may be disappointed by the infrequent use of references. There are no illustrations in the book but there must have been occasional images used in the original magazine articles because there are a few places in the book referring to them. These are trivial criticisms for an entertaining book.

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*How Glasses Caught a Killer and Other Stories of How Optics Changed the World, Second Edition.* David Baker. United Kingdom: FeedARead.com Publishing, 2016. ISBN 978-1-78610-324-6. 222 pages. Softcover, \$12.65.