ECS Classics

ECS—One Hundred Ten Years Later: Solving the World's Most Important Challenges

by Roque Calvo

ECS has a rich history that includes some of the greatest, most influential scientists that ever lived, and as we mark our 110th anniversary this year, we thought it was appropriate to bring some of that history back to life through the "ECS Classics" column.

Having worked for ECS for over 30 years, I have a great appreciation for our history because it is so enlightening about the ideals of a scientific society and science in general. I also have a direct personal connection to our history because ECS was born in the great city of Philadelphia but grew up on the campus of Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, just a few miles from where I was raised. The first President of the American Electrochemical Society in 1902 (changed to The Electrochemical Society in 1930), Joseph W. Richards established an office at Lehigh University, which was our home until 1920.

Wilder D. Bancroft
ECS President (1905-1906)

This ECS Classic is a short excerpt from an address given by Jacob Gould Schurman President of Cornell University, that was published in Volume 6 of the *Transactions of the American Electrochemical Society* (the predecessor to the *Journal of The Electrochemical Society*). In this excerpt from the *Transactions*, Dr. Schurman, acting as the Honorary Host Chair of that meeting in Ithaca, New York in May 1906, welcomed the attendees of the ninth meeting and recognized the importance of their work. It is significant in the sense that Cornell and the region of upstate New York were a mecca of electrochemistry at that time; and the Chair of the meeting and the 4th President of ECS was Wilder D. Bancroft, who was one of the preeminent chemists of that era. I felt that President Schurman had a simple yet valuable message about the ideals of the Society. In this issue's "Pennington Corner," I have written about those ideals and have tried to characterize the importance of our science and the stewardship role ECS plays in its advancement. If you look at our recent work, for example, the Electrochemical Energy Summit[1] held at our last meeting in Boston, and next meeting's symposium on Clean Water Technologies,[2] it is very clear that electrochemical and solid state science is solving the world's most important challenges: clean water and renewable energy.

In his opening address at the Ninth Meeting in Ithaca, Dr. Schurman states, "…scientists engage in the investigation of nature, the observation of phenomena, the formulation of laws, the elaboration of theories. That you hold that in common with scientists in all fields of research, but in addition to that I understand it is a function of yours to apply the science which you thus discover to the improvement of man's condition; to enable man to acquire a larger mastery over nature; and that in the use of electrochemical methods you have been able to solve problems which were hitherto unapproachable…"

Dr. Schurman's message was quite a profound testament to the importance of electrochemistry in that era, yet, it is more important than ever. He recognized back in 1906, what has been become much more evident today; that discovery in electrochemistry leads to the "improvement of man's condition." Unchanged through 110 years is the ECS mission to disseminate knowledge to advance the science, and in 2012 we are assisting in the development of electrochemical methods that will keep a precious resource like water clean, and provide renewable clean energy to help sustain life on this planet. Unchanged for 110 years are our ideals… to make the world a better place for all of humankind to live.

1. 220th ECS Meeting Symposium; Boston, MA; October 9-14, 2011; J. Leddy and C. Bock, organizers.
2. 221st ECS Meeting Symposium; Seattle, WA; May 6-10, 2012; B. Stoner, Z. Aguilar, E. Greenbaum, P. M. Natishan, E. J. Taylor, and J. Weidner, organizers.

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