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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF STANDARDS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Letter
Circular
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FACTS ABOUT THE BUREAU OF STANDARDS

The Bureau of Standards was established on March 3, 1901, by Act of Congress, taking over the duties of the old Office of Weights and Measures of the Coast and Geodetic Survey. Originally under the Treasury Department and transferred to the Department of Commerce in 1903. When established the Bureau had a staff of 14 persons and was housed in temporary quarters near the Capitol. The staff now numbers nearly 800 and there are over a dozen permanent buildings, each designed for some particular class of work. Site is one of the most beautiful in Washington and comprises 45 acres.

The Bureau is made up of 11 scientific and technical divisions, an office division and operation and construction divisions. There are 85 sections or working units in these divisions, each dealing with a particular class of problems.

The results of the Bureau's work are made available through seven series of publications, through the Technical News Bulletin, and by means of articles in the technical and popular press.

The Director from 1901 to 1922 was Dr. S. W. Stratton, now President of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Present Director, appointed to succeed Dr. Stratton, is Dr. George K.Burgess, formerly chief of the division of metallurgy.

Among the accomplishments of the Bureau may be mentioned the following:

(1) The determination of the relation between the fundamental electrical units, and the fixing of the exact value of the candle-power.

(2) The analysis of complex spectra and the determination of the position of certain fundamental reference lines in spectra.

(3) Determination of more exact values for many fundamental constants, such as the constant of gravitation, thermal properties of ammonia, etc.

(4) Development of many improved analytical processes, such as analyses of rubber, natural gases and the rare metals.

(5) Fundamental investigational work on the properties of materials, including cement and concrete, brick, stone, the metals, rubber, paper, textiles and leather.

(6) Establishment of reasonable standards of performance for machines and and processes, including weighing and measuring appliances, internal combustion engines, gas appliances, recording instruments, etc.

(7) Discovery and development of new materials and development of new uses for existing materials, including corn sugar, sugar from artichokes, cotton substitutes for linen, improved paper for currency, and wear resisting metal coatings.

(8) Establishment of standards of practice, including electrical, head and eye, and logging safety codes, building requirements, etc.

(9) Reduction in variety and number of sizes of commodities, resulting in concentration of manufacturers' efforts on articles in greatest demand.

(10) Preparation of many specifications to cover purchase by Government of all sorts of materials.

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