

THE BECKMAN CENTER FOR THE HISTORY OF CHEMISTRY

CLAUDE K. DEISCHER

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

John A. Heitmann

in

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

on

27 April 1984

CENTER FOR HISTORY OF CHEMISTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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CLAUDE DEISCHER

1903 Born in Emmaus, Pennsylvania, 14 October

Education

1925 B.S., chemistry, Muhlenberg College
1928 M.S., chemistry, University of Pennsylvania
1933 Ph.D., chemistry, University of Pennsylvania

Professional Experience

1921-1927 Public school teacher
Department of Chemistry, University of Pennsylvania
1928-1971 Instructor to associate professor
1952-1965 Assistant chairman of chemistry department
1955-1971 Acting curator, E.F. Smith Memorial Library
1971 Emeritus professor

ABSTRACT

In this interview, Claude K. Deischer discusses his life and his career as a chemist and historian of chemistry. Initially, Deischer recollects his childhood and early education. He then speaks about his undergraduate education at Kutztown State and Muhlenberg and his graduate and postgraduate research at the University of Pennsylvania. A discussion of his early teaching at Penn, his initial interest in the history of science, and the Smith Collection follows. Deischer then appraises his scholarly activities during and after World War II and his department and students. The interview concludes with Deischer considering the part that he played in starting Chymia, and his contributions to the American Chemical Society and the Moravian Church.

INTERVIEWER

John A. Heitmann holds a B.S. degree in chemistry from Davidson College and an M.A. degree in history from Clemson University. From 1974 to 1979 he worked as a chemist in the metallurgical industry. He then studied at the Johns Hopkins University under Owen Hannaway and received his doctorate in the history of science in 1983.

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