

Founding *The Journal of Immunology*

by John Emrich

The year 2016 marks the centennial year for *The Journal of Immunology* (*The JI*), the preeminent peer-reviewed journal in the field of immunology and the official publication of The American Association of Immunologists (AAI) since 1916. Though long “the jewel in the crown” for AAI, *The JI* did not receive its genesis from within the AAI membership or Council. The request for creation of the journal, in fact, arose from within another society. Thanks to the foresight and organizational skills of A. Parker Hitchens, a founding member and the first chair of the AAI Council, the journal received its association with AAI.¹

When AAI, in 1915, was presented the opportunity to help found a journal, leaders of the burgeoning professional society were still focused on developing the membership and drafting bylaws. No mention of founding a journal dedicated to immunology appears in the minutes from either their organizational meeting in 1913 at the American Medical Association meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota, or the first annual meeting in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1914. As was the case for many other small societies, the publishing activities of AAI were limited to publishing reports of its meetings in the journal of a larger society. (AAI published its first five annual meeting proceedings in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and *Journal of the American Medical Association*.²) The focus of the AAI Council changed quickly, however, in the spring of 1915 with a request from Arthur F. Coca, president of the New York Society for Serology and Hematology (SSH).



Arthur F. Coca
The American Association of Immunologists, Center for Biological Sciences Archive, UMBC

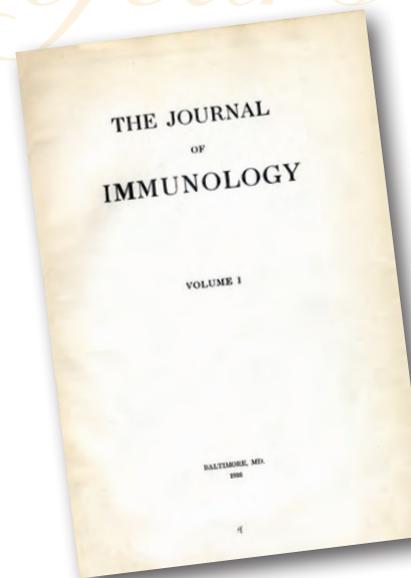
Arthur F. Coca, M.D. (1875–1959), elected to AAI in 1916, was the founder of *The Journal of Immunology* and served as its Editor-in-Chief from 1916 to 1948. In 1949, Coca was named honorary president of AAI, a title that has remained uniquely his through the years. Coca was a faculty member at Cornell University Medical College from 1910 to 1931,

Coca, instructor in pathology and bacteriology at Cornell University Medical College, was spearheading a movement to establish a “Journal of Immunity” modeled on the German journal *Zeitschrift für Immunitätsforschung und experimentelle Therapie*.³

Recognizing a potential synergy with the goals of the AAI, Coca reached out to the members of the AAI Council to determine if the society would consider cooperating in founding the journal. It was not wholly surprising that the two societies should cooperate, as they shared many members, and Coca was himself nominated for membership in AAI in 1915.

In his communications with Coca, Hitchens became convinced that a journal “devoted to the branch of medical science represented

attaining the position of full professor in 1924. In 1931, Coca accepted positions as professor of medicine at the New York Postgraduate Medical School at Columbia University (1931–1935) and as the medical director at Lederle Laboratories. He remained at Lederle Laboratories until his retirement in 1949.



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1. Before the adoption of the Bylaws and Constitution in 1917, authored by A. Parker Hitchens, the American Association of Immunologists was governed by the president and the Council. The early Council included the position of chair, responsible for making sure the Council carried out its proposals and those of the president. The early Council did not have a line of succession to the presidency, as it would after 1917.
2. “Minutes of First Annual Meeting of the American Association of Immunologists,” June 22, 1914, AAI Archive, Bethesda, MD [hereafter, AAI Archive-Bethesda]. Both the *New England Journal of Medicine* and *Journal of the American Medical Association* regularly published meeting reports and proceedings of smaller scientific and medical associations.
3. A. Parker Hitchens, “Report upon *The Journal of Immunology*,” Annual Council Meeting, June 10, 1916, AAI Archive-Bethesda. *Zeitschrift für Immunitätsforschung und experimentelle Therapie* was first published December 1908.

by this Association was about to be established” with or without any involvement of AAI. It was also clear to Hitchens that Coca’s work on establishing the new journal had progressed far enough that the inaugural issue would be published before the AAI Council could act on any potential arrangement. Furthermore, if such a journal was published without the cooperation of AAI, it would render “superfluous the future publication of an official organ of this Association, and, in this event, our Society would have been seriously handicapped in its future development.”⁴

Hitchens formally presented the idea of the “Journal of Immunity” to Council when it convened in early May at the annual meeting. Most councillors were receptive to the new journal and “thought it a good thing and that the society should cooperate with Dr. Coca in the matter.”⁵ Although Council could not be expected to take decisive action immediately on a matter of such consequence, the Council members empowered Hitchens “to represent the society in the negotiation with Dr. Coca”⁶ and act for the Council in any negotiations.⁷ In Hitchens, the Council could not have made a more apt selection. He was the

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—James W. Jobling, AAI president, August 5, 1915

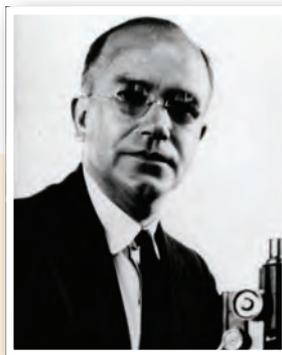
secretary of the Society of American Bacteriology (SAB, now the American Society for Microbiology) and would soon be the first managing editor of the newly founded *Journal of Bacteriology*

(*JB*) as well as the first and only editor of *Abstracts of Bacteriology*.⁸ Furthermore, he negotiated the *JB* contract on behalf of SAB with the publisher Williams & Wilkins Company of Baltimore.⁹ Despite these crucial early decisions by Hitchens and the AAI Council, it was not a certainty that *The JI* would be the official publication of the association.

The full AAI leadership was not completely convinced of the need for a new journal specializing in immunology. In August, new AAI President James W. Jobling, M.D., professor of pathology at Vanderbilt University, wrote to his past colleague Simon Flexner, director of the prestigious Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research (RIMR), expressing his reservations about the prospects of a new journal.¹⁰ Flexner was an understandable choice, as the renowned William H. Welch had recently transferred ownership and publication of the

1920 for an appointment at the Hygienic Laboratories of the Public Health Service, now the National Institutes of Health, before returning to the Medical Corps, where he remained until his retirement from the Army in 1941 as a lieutenant colonel. He spent the last four years of his professional career in public service, working for municipal and state boards of health.

Arthur Parker Hitchens, M.D., (1877–1949) was a founding member of AAI and served in a number leadership positions in the earliest years of the association—first as council chair (1914–1917) and later as a councillor (1918–1921). Hitchens was a staff scientist at H. K. Mulford Company from 1901 until 1918, when he joined the U.S. Army Medical Corp for service in the First World War. Hitchens left the Army for a short time in



A. Parker Hitchens
The American Association of Immunologists, Center for Biological Sciences Archive, UMBC

4. Hitchens, “Report upon *The Journal of Immunology*,” 1916, AAI Archive-Bethesda.
5. “Minutes of Second Annual Meeting of the American Association of Immunologists,” May, 10 1915, AAI Archive-Bethesda.
6. Ibid.
7. Hitchens, “Report upon *The Journal of Immunology*,” 1916, AAI Archive-Bethesda.
8. Arthur Parker Hitchens, M.D. (1877–1949), was the secretary-treasurer for the Society of American Bacteriology (SAB) in the 1910s and 1920s. He also served as vice president (1923) and president (1924) of SAB. The SAB was renamed the American Society for Microbiology in December 1960. The *Journal of Bacteriology* was first published in January 1916 and continues today. *Abstracts of Bacteriology* was published from February 1916 until December 1925.
9. Claude P. Brown, “Arthur Parker Hitchens, 1877–1949,” *Journal of Bacteriology* 60, no. 1 (1950): 2.
10. The Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research (RIMR), which opened in 1901, was renamed The Rockefeller University in 1965. Simon Flexner was the first director of RIMR and held the position until 1935.

prestigious *Journal of Experimental Medicine* to RIMR, with Flexner serving as editor, a role he was to fulfill from 1905 to 1946.¹¹ Though the proposed immunology journal would be “international in character,” Jobling had his doubts that “it would receive sufficient support to justify its existence.” Furthermore, he was “of the opinion that there are enough journals now.” Despite the compelling reasons stated by proponents, Jobling was demonstrably opposed to “any idea leading to the financial responsibility” on the part of the nascent association for fear that initial costs might place serious strain on the finances of the young society.¹²

Jobling, however, chose not to make the long train trip from Nashville, Tennessee, to attend a joint meeting of the councils of AAI and SSH at the new Yale Club in New York City on October 7, 1915. The meeting was scheduled for leaders of the societies to explore production requirements and consider a working relationship for the proposed new journal, now dubbed the “Journal of Immunology.” The AAI Council was represented by Council Chair Hitchens, Vice President George P. Sanborn, Councillor John A. Kolmer, and Secretary Martin J. Synnott. In addition to President Jobling, three councillors and the treasurer elected to miss the meeting.¹³ To ascertain the costs associated with the proposed journal, Coca invited representatives from the publishing services company, Williams & Wilkins. The meeting resulted in a positive prospect for the publication of the journal: Coca was

unanimously elected managing editor;¹⁴ a committee to select the board of editors was created; and the advisory board began taking shape.¹⁵

Despite these positive developments, a large, unresolved issue still loomed over the AAI delegation: how was the society to finance its portion of the publishing costs?

Resources were scarce. AAI Treasurer Willard J. Stone, in a December 28, 1915, letter to Martin Synnott, estimated the association’s portion of the publishing expenses for the first year at \$240, an amount exceeding available funds in the treasury by \$75.¹⁶ With just 58 members, AAI would have to assess each member \$4.00 in addition to their \$5.00 annual dues assessment to cover costs. In addition to imposing such a high fee on member subscribers, the two societies would be required by Williams & Wilkins to cover the deficit guarantee in case sufficient subscription revenues were not reached. The two-and-one-half year-old AAI was in no position at the time either to offset the high subscription fee for members or cover the deficit guarantee required by Williams & Wilkins.

AAI was also constrained from raising dues to expand its financial reserves. The just-drafted bylaws stated, “The dues of the Association shall be fixed annually by the Council and they shall not exceed five dollars.”¹⁷ Although Council soon realized that this cap could not be maintained indefinitely, the \$5.00 maximum



James W. Jobling, c. 1915
The American Association of Immunologists, Center for Biological Sciences Archive, UMBC

James W. Jobling, M.D. (1876–1961), elected to AAI in 1914, served the association as its second president (1915–1916) and as a member of *The Journal of Immunology* board of editors from 1916 to 1935. Before his election to AAI, Jobling had worked as a pathologist at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago from 1909 until moving in 1913

to join the faculty of Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons (P&S) as an assistant professor. In 1914, Jobling left P&S to accept a post as full professor of pathology at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. In 1918, he returned to P&S as professor of pathology, a position he held until his retirement in 1945.

11. Welch founded and edited the *Journal of Experimental Medicine* from 1896 to 1902. He transferred the journal to RIMR in 1902, and publishing was suspended until 1905, as the backlog of all submitted manuscripts needed to be moved from Baltimore and organized and reviewed at RIMR. The position of editor was similar to editor-in-chief today.
12. James W. Jobling to Simon Flexner, August 5, 1915, Simon Flexner Papers, “Jobling, James W., 1912–1945, Folder 1,” American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA.
13. Absent from the meeting were Treasurer Willard J. Stone and Councillors Oscar Berghausen, Campbell Laidlaw, and Henry L. Ulrich. Minutes of joint meeting of AAI and SSH Councils, 7 October 1915, AAI Archive-Bethesda.
14. The position of managing editor was the equivalent to editor-in-chief today.
15. Minutes of joint meeting of AAI and SSH Councils, October 7, 1915, AAI Archive-Bethesda.
16. The current balance of the treasury was estimated by Stone to be around \$165. Willard J. Stone to Martin J. Synnott, 28 December 1915, AAI Archive-Bethesda.
17. The AAI Constitution and Bylaws were ratified in 1917 without an explicit maximum of dues. The proposed Constitution and Bylaws were unanimously adopted at the first annual meeting of the American Association of Immunologists, June, 22 1914; Hitchens, “Report upon *The Journal of Immunology*,” 1916, AAI Archive-Bethesda.

for dues stood as an unofficial ceiling into the 1920s. By providing the official journal of the society to members within their dues, as was typical of learned societies, only \$1.00 of income per member would remain for maintenance of AAI activities. Council members knew that was an insufficient amount “for the maintenance of the Society’s affairs,”¹⁸ notably the annual meeting, which cost the association nearly \$200 in 1915.¹⁹

Hitchens, however, was able to address both financial challenges without putting the association in financial straits. He proposed making journal subscriptions optional for AAI members and providing members a 20 percent discount on their subscriptions, charging members \$4.00 annually, compared to the \$5.00 assessed non-members in the United States to subscribe.²⁰ To address the deficit guarantee, he sent out personal letters to “several of the more interested members, offering them the privilege of guaranteeing individually a fraction” of the fund. He quickly received enough positive responses to “assure the publishers of adequate financial support to proceed with the Journal.”²¹

There is no record of the AAI Council holding an official vote approving publication of

SUBSCRIPTION TERMS

The Journal of Immunology will be a bimonthly. Each volume will consist of six numbers and will contain from 500 to 525 pages. The subscription price is \$4.00 to members of the American Association of Immunologists and the New York Society of Serology and Hematology; \$5.00 to non-members in North America; \$5.50 elsewhere. Postage free.

Subscriptions and all business matters should be sent to the Williams & Wilkins Company, 2419–21 Greenmount Avenue, Baltimore, U. S. A.

Subscription Terms for *The Journal of Immunology*, 1916

The American Association of Immunologists Archive

The JI, but President Jobling, during the annual meeting May 11–12, 1916, sent a letter to all AAI members urging them to subscribe to the new journal “devoted to the problems of Immunology.” In the letter, Jobling described the policy of the journal as “to welcome all studies bearing on

the general problems of Immunology as well as to publish the proceedings of our association.”²²

The inaugural issue of *The JI* was published in February 1916 as a cooperative effort between AAI and the New York Society of Serology and Hematology. The bimonthly journal would serve as the official organ for both organizations. It would also provide demarcation of immunology as a separate field in the medical community and create a locus for immunological research from “the best equipped laboratories in this country and England.”²³

The first issue of the new journal contained articles on mechanisms of anaphylaxis and immunity and viral and bacterial infections, as well as the scientific proceedings of the December 3, 1915, meeting of SSH. The first article was “Studies in Anaphylaxis: On the Relation between Precipitin and Sensitizin,” by Richard Weil, chair of the Department of Experimental Medicine at Cornell Medical College. In the article, Weil, a founding member

Richard Weil, M.D. (1876–1917), elected to AAI in 1914, served the association as its third president (1916–1917), councillor (1917), and member of *The Journal of Immunology* (*The JI*) Board of Editors (1916–1917). A faculty member at Cornell University Medical College from 1911 until his premature death in 1917, Weil wrote the first article published in *The JI*, the 14th part in his 17-part “Studies in Anaphylaxis”



Richard Weil, c. 1915
The American Association of Immunologists, Center for Biological Sciences Archive, UMBC

series. Weil proceeded to publish parts 16 and 17 of this series in *The JI*. Commissioned into the U.S. Army Medical Corp when the United States entered the First World War in 1917, Weil was appointed chief of medical staff at Camp Wheeler near Macon, Georgia. While attending hospitalized troops there, Weil contracted pneumonia and died on November 19, 1917.

18. A. Parker Hitchens to Martin J. Synnott, February 9, 1916, AAI Archive-Bethesda.

19. Willard J. Stone to Martin J. Synnott, December 28, 1915, AAI Archive-Bethesda.

20. The subscription price for non-members outside of the United States was \$5.50.

21. Hitchens, “Report upon *The Journal of Immunology*,” 1916, AAI Archive-Bethesda.

22. James W. Jobling and Martin J. Synnott to AAI membership, May 11 and 12, 1915, AAI Archive-Bethesda.

23. Announcement of *The Journal of Immunology*, 1916, AAI Archive-Bethesda.

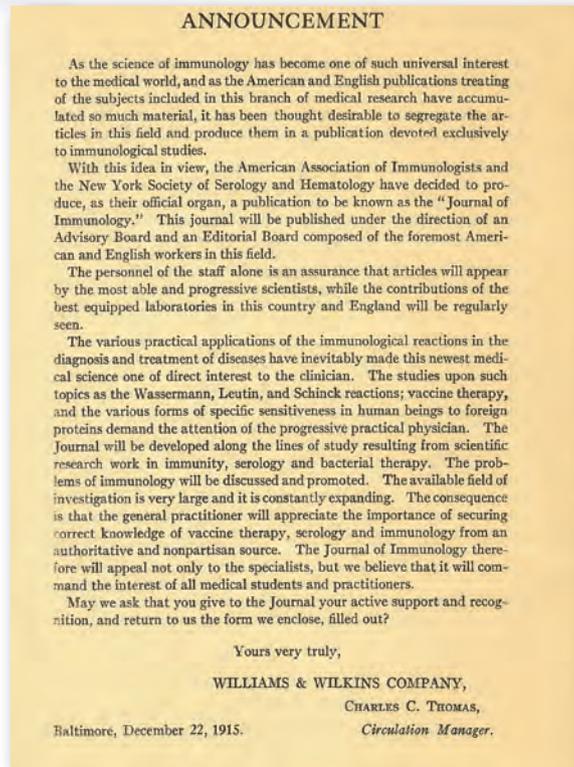


of AAI, a member of SSH, and a member of the board of editors of *The JI*, took a firm stance on the cellular cause of anaphylaxis at a time when the mechanism was hotly debated.

Thirteen months later, Charles Thomas, circulation manager of Williams & Wilkins, sent the AAI Council a promising status update on the new journal. The subscription list of *The JI* had grown to 439 with subscriptions “received from practically every foreign country,” except those of the Central Powers countries of the First World War.²⁴

The average number of new subscribers each month had increased to 20 since November 1916, and Thomas predicted that subscriptions should reach 550–600 by the end of the year. His final assessment of the new journal was that it “has a fine future and that it will establish itself on a substantial basis, taking care of its own expenses.”²⁵

On March 31, 1920, the AAI Council and SSH Executive Committee met at the home of AAI and SSH President Hans Zinsser in New York City.²⁶ As SSH “had omitted its monthly meetings for over a year and since the functions of the society had been in a measure superseded by the American Association of Immunologists,” the society wished to merge with AAI. An agreement was reached between the two organizations, and the proposal was put before the SSH membership that summer. On July 27, 1920, a quorum of SSH members voted in the



Announcement of *The Journal of Immunology*, 1916
The American Association of Immunologists Archive

“I believe that my interest in this direction is engendered by my desire to see the Association of Immunologists on a good, sound and influential basis.”

—A. Parker Hitchens, February 9, 1916

affirmative that all members in good standing were to be notified that they would become members of AAI unless they had “definite objections.” By the end of the year, SSH had ceased operations, and all but a handful of their members had joined AAI. With the cessation of SSH, AAI became the sole publisher of *The JI*.²⁷

Over the years, *The Journal of Immunology* has published many influential articles that have moved the field of immunology forward. In the process, it has fulfilled, if not surpassed, Hitchens’s expressed wishes for the role to be played by the journal: “I believe that my interest in this direction is engendered by my desire to see the Association of Immunologists on a good, sound and influential basis. As I see it, the position I am anxious to have the Association take can scarcely be gained unless the Association has an official organ.”²⁸

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Contributor: Kaylene J. Kenyon, Ph.D.,
The Journal of Immunology
AAI Publication Director

Editor: Mary I. Bradshaw, M.A., M.Ed., AAI Senior Director
of Communications and Development

28. The Central Powers included Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Ottoman Empire. By March 1917, the war had already been raging across Europe, Russia, and Anatolia for two years and nine months.

29. Charles Thomas to Martin J. Synnott, March 30, 1917, AAI Archive-Bethesda.

30. Hans Zinsser, M.D. (1878–1940), was elected to AAI in 1917, served as its sixth president (1919–1920), and was a member of the board of editors of *The Journal of Immunology* (1916–1940).

31. David J. Kalinsky, secretary of SSH, to the Members of the Society for Serology and Hematology, draft, 1920, AAI Archive-Bethesda.

32. A. Parker Hitchens to Martin J. Synnott, February 9, 1916, AAI Archive-Bethesda.