

The Eye Associates Group, LLC

Founded: 1894

Location: West Washington Street, Hartford City (1894–1919); 220 West Main Street (1919–96); 315 Huggins Drive (1996– )

Thomas Bell, a native Hoosier and an 1893 graduate of Parsons Horological Institute in Optometry, of Peoria, Illinois, started his practice in Hartford City in 1894. Bell was an active proponent of licensing reforms and led the fight that resulted in a 1907 Indiana statute for licensing optometrists. Before starting his optometry practice, Bell operated a jewelry business and sold oil leases. In 1910 he added chiropractor services to his practice. Bell built the office at 220 West Main Street. The first floor served as his clinic while the second floor was utilized as an apartment.

William Hamilton took over the business in 1936. Hamilton was a 1923 graduate of Northern Illinois School of Optometry and a World War I pilot, who had a practice in Terre Haute before coming to Hartford City. R. Lewis Scott joined Hamilton's practice in 1957, and Hamilton retired a year later. Scott was the first nonnative Hoosier to become a partner in the firm. Born in Texas, Scott graduated with honors from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in the 1950s. During World War II Scott served as a pilot and was shot down over enemy lines, spending fourteen months in a German prisoner of war camp.

Scott proved instrumental in convincing the state legislature to pass a continuing education bill for optometry. During his career he has served as president of the Indiana State Board of Optometry, the National Board of Optometry, and the International Association of Boards of Optometry. Scott has been recognized several times over the years as a leader in the field. He was selected Indiana optometrist of the year twice and

chosen national optometrist of the year once. Scott received Indiana University's School of Optometry Philanthropic Award in 1983. Five years later he was inducted into the National Academy of Practice, a health care advisory panel that recommends policy changes to Congress. In 1989 Scott received the Sagamore of the Wabash from Gov. Robert Orr.

Scott began giving schoolchildren eye screening tests in 1955, a tradition continued by the firm in the 1990s. In the 1970s he hired Richard L. Windsor, who developed a program to provide eye care to nursing home patients while in optometry school, a specialty the practice continues through its clinics in Fort Wayne and Marion. In 1973 Windsor, an Indiana University School of Optometry graduate, became a member of the firm. Windsor quickly became a leader in optometry throughout the state, receiving the Indiana Optometric Association's President's Citation in 1978. Eight years later the same organization bestowed its Meritorious Service Award for his development of eye-care programs at nursing homes and retirement homes. Windsor lectured widely throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including stints at Indiana University as an adjunct professor. In 1991 he wrote a chapter concerning the management of low vision patients that was used by the American Optometric Association. He was chosen president of the Indiana Optometric Association in 1993.

In 1983 the firm became Scott, Windsor & Ford, when Craig A. Ford became a partner. Ford was the second graduate of Indiana University and the first native of Hartford City to become a member of the firm. Ford and other researchers published a journal article in the *American Journal of Physiological Optics*. Todd J. Fettig was added to the group in 1989. Fettig, in keeping with a tradition of recognition by the firm's

members, received the Volunteer of the Year Award from Services for the Visually and Hearing Impaired in 1989. Four years later he was chosen president of the East Central Optometric Society. In 1993 Ford was awarded the President's Citation by the state group.

The firm expanded and prospered in the late twentieth century. The group purchased two practices in the mid-1980s, one in Dunkirk and one in Albany. The Indiana General Assembly awarded the group its "Century Award" in 1994. The partners formed the Eye Associates Group two years later. In 1998 the Group had clinics or offices in six locations and ran clinics in several nursing homes, two children's homes, and the Methodist Home in Warren.