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Louis Pasteur - I

Lead: French chemist Louis Pasteur had little scientific inclination in his early years. Despite a lackluster academic record his goal was to become a professor of fine arts.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Born in eastern France, the son of a tanner, Pasteur showed an early aptitude for painting. His interest in matters scientific grew as he studied at the Royal College at Besançon and then the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. Successive teaching posts followed in Dijon,

Strasbourg, back to the Ecole, Lille and the Sorbonne in Paris. From the beginning Pasteur's approach to his work wedded the theoretical to the practical, always with a view to innovation and never permitting conventional wisdom to suppress his creativity. In 1863 as the dean of the new science faculty at Lille University he instituted night classes so industrial and service workers might engage in continued education.

Pasteur first gained recognition for his work on chystallography, but soon was drawn into biology, the field which would occupy his driving interest for the balance of his life. A local industrialist complained that his wine was growing sour in the bottling

process. Pasteur began research on fermentation. He determined that gently heating wine would prevent souring during the aging process. This procedure, now known as Pasteurization is widely used in the fabrication of food today.

He was attracted by the revived belief in spontaneous generation, the idea that some organisms simply appear without the normal life cycle of birth parents. He elegantly demonstrated this impossibility and thus disproved spontaneous creation. Next time: silkworms, anthrax and the theory of germs.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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Crellin, J.K. *Pasteur and the Germ Theory*. New York: Viking Press, 1968.

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