

• New Machines and Gadgets •

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⚙️ **DRAFTING TABLE** provides both working space and storage space. The overall size is 106 inches long and 36 inches deep. There is an adjustable-angle drawing board, an attached reference table, a full-size drawer, a box drawer and two filing cabinet drawers.

Science News Letter, June 1, 1957

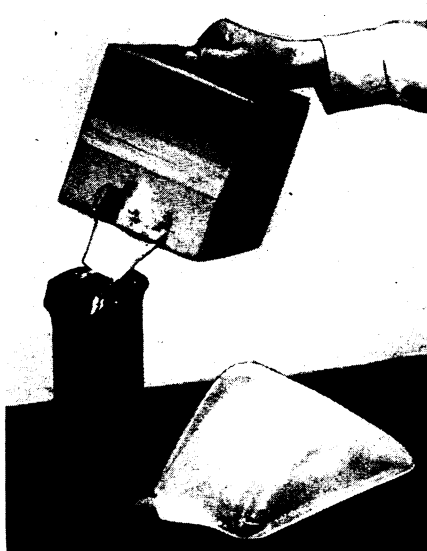
⚙️ **FLASHER LAMPS** have the flasher unit built in, blinking on and off without the need for a separate flasher mechanism. Designed as warning devices for home, highway and industry, the lamps are available in three types: cigarette lighter plug-in; flashlight battery-operated; and handlantern battery-operated.

Science News Letter, June 1, 1957

⚙️ **WALKING PROSPECTOR** for oil and mineral finding can be used to measure the vertical component of the earth's magnetic field. The 12-pound device is strapped around the chest and walked over the prospecting area. It works like a Geiger or scintillation counter.

Science News Letter, June 1, 1957

⚙️ **LIQUID CONTAINER** made of a polyethylene resin has a molded-on spout as shown in the photograph and is for use within a paperboard shell. The same con-



tainer can be used for shipping, storing and then dispensing. It is lightweight, foldable and disposable.

Science News Letter, June 1, 1957

⚙️ **METAL COATING** is described as a chemical treatment and organic coating in one application. The paint coating adheres

to all ferrous and non-ferrous metals. It dries in five to ten minutes, is resistant to salt spray, acid and alkali, and heat and cold.

Science News Letter, June 1, 1957

⚙️ **HOME RECORDER** makes 33, 45 or 78 rpm records that can be played back immediately after cutting. The unit, which fits any phonograph, includes a recording arm, head and tracking disc which operates on any turntable, an electronic recording microphone and blank records.

Science News Letter, June 1, 1957

⚙️ **AIR SAMPLER** small enough to be held in the palm of the hand is designed to help in air pollution control studies. Weighing less than two pounds, the device has a built-in explosion-proof power source that permits air sampling under actual operating conditions. It can be attached to a workman's clothing.

Science News Letter, June 1, 1957

⚙️ **PARCEL POST SCALE** is designed for home use. It has a dial lock for "holding" the weight registered after an overhanging package is removed from the 8-by-10-inch platform. The five-pound scale can be stored on its side.

Science News Letter, June 1, 1957



Nature Ramblings



By HORACE LOFTIN

► WHEN AND HOW did man first learn to cook his food? How, indeed, did he learn which materials were edible and which not edible? How did he discover the hundreds of useful medicinal herbs and spices that have been a part of every culture?

These first discoveries are fascinating to think about. What may be more fascinating is to ponder the instances when such discoveries seem to be made independently by different peoples. Liquid-amber, used as an incense, herb and spice by Europeans and Orientals and by the Aztecs of Mexico, is an example of this kind of discovery.

Liquid-amber comes from the genus of trees bearing that same name—*Liquidambar*. There are only three species of *Liquidambar* tree in the world. The American one is the familiar sweet gum, found from Connecticut to Guatemala. Another species is in Turkey and the third in Formosa.

Liquid-Amber



Until the discovery of the New World, Turkey was practically the sole source of this prized incense and medicinal. But in 1519, the Spanish conquistador of Mexico, Cortez, was presented by the Aztec emperor with "three little canes highly ornamented, containing liquid-amber, mixed with an herb they call tobacco, and when he had sufficiently heard and viewed the singers, dancers and buffoons, he took a little of the smoke of one of these canes." Later it was

discovered the Indians used the liquid-amber much the same as did the Orientals and Europeans.

So the question arises: Did both worlds, the Old and the New, discover the use of this resin separately? Or was it part of the ancient lore brought to the New World by the first "Indians" that crossed the Bering Strait so long ago? This is not likely, since the sweet gum is not found in the American West. Most probable is the explanation that the inquisitive spirit of man led to the independent discovery of liquid-amber and its uses in both hemispheres.

American liquid-amber was never of great economic importance. But during World War II, when the normal source of the resin in Formosa was cut off, a thriving little industry grew up in the sweet gum regions of the South.

Today, liquid-amber is used as a base for salves, adhesives, perfuming powders, soaps, and tobacco flavoring.

Science News Letter, June 1, 1957