

Doctor James Law

Professor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery

February 13, 1838 — May 10, 1921

The career of James Law embraced the first fifty years of the history of Cornell University. He was a member of the first Faculty which began its work in October, 1868, and until his death, May 10, 1921, either as active or emeritus professor his services to the University and his adopted country were continuous and invaluable.

It was significant that in the young University almost the first professorship created was of a subject that had at that time no academic standing in America, and the value of which to purely scientific studies and to the welfare of the State was scarcely dreamed of. To Ezra Cornell was due the recognition of that subject; and to Andrew White was due the recognition of the equal value of all subjects of academic study.

No choice could have been happier from these two points of view. The new professor had been trained in the best schools of Europe under the most famous teachers of their day, and was himself of such personal dignity of character as to impress all who met him with the conviction that he was of the highest type of scholar and man.

Although his chair was but one of many in the new university, Dr. Law by his own broad knowledge practically founded a course in Veterinary Medicine, and furnished the country with graduates who later organized the National Control of Animal Diseases.

It was the broad knowledge of every branch of his subject and his practical application of it to the problems of animal industry in the United States that won for him and the University, which he served so faithfully, the recognition by the State of New York and the Federal Government of his accomplishments; and which led to the creation, in 1894, of the New York State Veterinary College, the first state veterinary college in America.

During the interval between 1868 and 1894, Dr. Law had, almost single-handed, accomplished a revolution in the conception of the knowledge and practice of Veterinary Medicine in the United States, and had raised it to a rank coordinate with human medicine. His persistent effort in raising the standard of veterinary education has found expression not only in the institution of which he was head, but also in the veterinary colleges of America.

He was a great teacher because he was a great scholar, and he pursued his unremitting labors almost to the last hour of his long and honored life. He won the affection and respect of all who knew him, and the University owes him for his splendid example of unselfish devotion, gratitude which cannot be expressed in words.

Source: Fac. Rec, p. 1129 Joint Resolutions Adopted by The Trustees and Faculty of Cornell University, June, Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-One

Chronology

Professor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery, 1868 – 1896

Professor of the Principles and Practice of Veterinary Medicine, Veterinary Science, and Veterinary Therapeutics, 1896 – 1908

Director of The New York State Veterinary College and Dean of Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, 1896 – 1908

Emeritus Professor of The Principles and Practice of Veterinary Medicine, 1908 – 1921