

## Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

# Daniel Elmer Salmon, First DVM

By Dr. Donald F. Smith  
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Not as erudite as James Law,<sup>1</sup> nor as politically savvy as Alexandre Liautard,<sup>2</sup> Daniel Salmon nonetheless deserves to be included as one of the three most important US veterinarians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During his 22-year tenure as head of the Bureau of Animal Industry, Salmon and the scientists under his direction made epoch discoveries in comparative medicine that have had far-reaching implications for agriculture, medicine and public health not just in that era, but up to the present.



*Daniel Elmer Salmon*  
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Salmon wrote or co-authored over 100 scientific papers including a seminal paper—with colleague Theobald Smith<sup>3</sup>—describing the organism that carries his name (Salmonella). Among his public health advances were the development of a federal meat-inspection program and the quarantine requirement for foreign animals.

Tragically for the scientific and public health community, Salmon's forced resignation from the Bureau in 1905 as a political appeasement in the aftermath of the publication of Upton Sinclair's, *The Jungle*, was a major loss to medical science and public health. He was eventually

cleared of alleged conflict of interest charges after an exhaustive investigation<sup>4</sup> and subsequently started a veterinary college in Uruguay that remains in operation. He died in 1914.

It is fitting to remember Daniel Salmon this month, for it was 145 years ago on October 7 that he was among the first students of all disciplines to matriculate at Cornell University. Six years later, he was awarded the nation's first DVM degree.

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<sup>1</sup> Law, James, Professor of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University, and first principal of the New York State Veterinary College.

<sup>2</sup> Liautard, Alexandre, French-born veterinarian in New York City, generally considered the founder of organized veterinary medicine in the US.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, Theobald, renowned comparative pathologist and physician, colleague of Dr. Salmon at the Bureau of Animal Industry early in his career.

<sup>4</sup> New York Times, Dr. Salmon Cleared of Beef Label Charge. Aug 31, 1905

#### KEYWORDS:

Daniel Elmer Salmon  
History of Veterinary Medicine  
Cornell University  
James Law  
Alexandre Liautard  
Bureau of Animal Industry  
Upton Sinclair  
Comparative medicine  
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#### TOPIC:

One Health

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dr. Donald F. Smith, Dean Emeritus of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, had a passion for the value of the history of veterinary medicine as a gateway for understanding the present and the future of the profession.

Throughout his many professional roles from professor of surgery, to Department Chair of Clinical Sciences, Associate Dean of Education and of Academic Programs and Dean, he spearheaded changes in curriculum, clinical services, diagnostic services and more. He was a diplomat of the American College of Veterinary

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Surgeons and a member of the National Academy of Practices. Most recently he played a major role in increasing the role of women in veterinary leadership.

*Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine* is one of his projects where he was able to share his vast knowledge of the profession.