

## Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

# Five 19<sup>th</sup> Century Veterinary Colleges Still Going Strong

By Dr. Donald F. Smith  
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The legacy veterinary colleges that originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century are featured in this story. These five colleges, the alumni of which come close to making up 22%<sup>1</sup> of the approximately 84,000 living AVMA members, have illustrious and varied histories. Here is a brief synopsis of the early history of each.

**Iowa State University (1879):**<sup>2</sup> After including veterinary studies in its agricultural program since 1872, Iowa State's veterinary college was officially founded seven years later. This designates it as the longest continuously operating veterinary college in the US. Initially a two-year program, the curriculum was expanded to three years in 1887 and four years in 1903 (also a first). The name was not changed to College of Veterinary Medicine for another 50 years.

**University of Pennsylvania (1884):**<sup>3</sup> Penn's veterinary school arose as a branch of medicine to complement the School of Medicine that dates to the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. The only one of the ten legacy colleges to arise outside the land-grant system, the school's private status is reflected in the role that a donor's gift—that of university trustee Joshua Bertram Lippincott—had in establishing the school. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania also appropriated a sizable sum at its beginning.<sup>4</sup> The first two deans, Rush Shippen Huidekoper and John Marshall, were both physicians.

**The Ohio State University (1885):**<sup>5</sup> Justified on the basis of agricultural interests to protect the livestock industry from disease and serve public health interests, the School of Veterinary Medicine (renamed the College of Veterinary Medicine two years later), was founded as part of the land-grant campus in the rapidly-growing city of Columbus.<sup>6</sup> The first dean, H. J. Detmers, was a German man who had been trained at the Royal Veterinary College in Berlin. The curriculum was initially three years in length, increasing to four years in 1915. Ohio State has granted over 7,200 DVM degrees, the most of any US college.

**Cornell University (1894):**<sup>7</sup> Cornell was the first university to have a professor of veterinary medicine when James Law came from Scotland and began instruction in 1868. The New York State Veterinary College was established in 1894 as the first state-supported college at the private Cornell University, and two years later the first class matriculated. Though only

four students received a Bachelor of Veterinary Science (BVSc) during the three decades after the university was established, two of them were particularly noteworthy, Daniel Salmon<sup>8</sup> and Fred Kilbourne.<sup>9</sup>

**Washington State University (1899):**<sup>10</sup> The college was established just nine years after the founding of the university in 1890 and ten years after Washington became the 42<sup>nd</sup> state. The university is located near the border with Idaho in the town of Pullman, whose current population is about 45,000. The first professor of veterinary science was an Iowa State DVM named Sofus Bertelson Nelson, a native of Denmark. Three students matriculated in 1899 from the new School of Veterinary Science<sup>11</sup> and two graduated from the three-year curriculum in 1902.

It took 20 years from the opening of the first of these colleges to establish the remaining four. Sixteen years later, five more colleges—all at land-grant institutions—would open and remain operating to the present. They were established in the states of Alabama, Colorado, Kansas, Michigan and Texas.

Meanwhile other colleges, mostly private and in large cities, would close during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In many cases, their loss was not felt long term, but in other cases, such as the Chicago and Kansas City colleges in the Midwest, and Harvard and the New York City colleges in the East, the loss would ultimately prove to be severely limiting for the long term direction and impact of the profession.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The number of living AVMA graduates from these five colleges is: OSU, 5009; U Penn, 3937; ISU, 3792; Cornell, 3308; WSU, 2530 ([AVMA data base](#), August 2013).

<sup>2</sup> [Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine. History](#). Iowa State College of Veterinary Medicine web site, Sept 1, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> [School of Veterinary Medicine. A Brief History](#). University of Pennsylvania web site. Sept 1, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Lippincott's initial gift (1882) was \$10,000 and the Commonwealth's initial allocation (1889) was \$25,000. Other donors provided substantial support for in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>5</sup> [About the College. History](#). Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine web site, Sept 1, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Columbus was the 30<sup>th</sup> largest city in the US in 1890 (88,000) and by 1900, it had grown to over 125,000 people (28<sup>th</sup> largest).

<sup>7</sup> [History and Archives](#). Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine web site, Sept 1, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Salmon, who did advanced training and was awarded the first DVM degree in the US was the first director of the Bureau of Animal Industry.

<sup>9</sup> Fred Kilbourne was one of the principal scientists responsible for discovering the cause of Texas Fever, and elucidating the pathogenesis associated with an intermediary host transmission of infection.

<sup>10</sup> [About the College of Veterinary Medicine](#). Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine web site, Sept 1, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> The status was changed to College of Veterinary Science in 1916 and College of Veterinary Medicine in 1925.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, Donald F., *Triumph and Tragedy: The Story of Law and Liautard. Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*. September 1, 2013.

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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 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.