

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

When United States Students Went to Canada for a Veterinary Education

By Dr. Donald F. Smith, with assistance from Melena Hagstrom and Allison Salin
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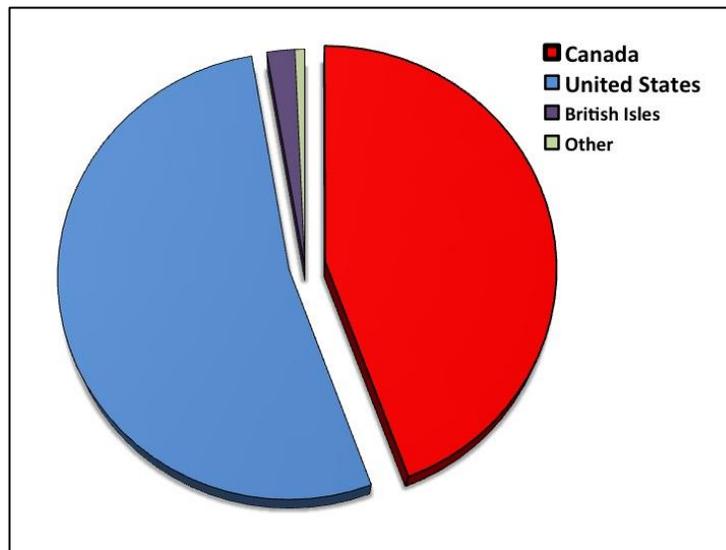
Veterinarians are generally aware that many US residents now receive their veterinary degrees from colleges or schools of veterinary medicine outside North America. This was also a frequent occurrence during the 1960s and early 1970s when many went to Italy or the Philippines either because there was no veterinary college in their state, or because there were not sufficient places for qualified candidates in those states with colleges.

This migration of US residents to another country for their veterinary education also occurred much earlier in our history, during the last third of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century when perhaps as many as 2,000 students went to Canada for their veterinary education. A few hundred went to the Montreal Veterinary College, where they received one of the most rigorous educational experiences of the period. The majority, however, attended the college at Toronto (which became known as the Ontario Veterinary College), where they were subjected to a shorter and somewhat less rigorous curriculum before returning to the US to practice.

The principals of the two colleges, both Scots (Duncan McEachran, Montreal and Andrew Smith, Toronto), were classmates from the Edinburgh Veterinary College. They actually taught together in Toronto for a short time before McEachran, feeling that Smith's entrance requirements and curriculum were not of adequate caliber, moved to Montreal where he began a veterinary college that became affiliated with McGill University's medical school and, at the urging of physician William Osler, was called the College of Comparative Medicine. Though the total number of US residents who traveled to complete their education in Montreal before the college closed in 1903 is unknown, a substantial proportion of Massachusetts veterinarians at the turn of the century were US citizens who had been educated there.

Because of the excellent records maintained by the Ontario Veterinary College, we have access to the locations from which US and Canadian students were residents.¹ Of the 3,278 graduates between the opening of the college in 1862 and the retirement of Andrew Smith in 1908, when the college became part of the University of Toronto, the number of US graduates actually outnumbered Canadian graduates (53% to 44%). Three percent of the graduates were from other countries.

The graph below shows the number of veterinary graduates from the Ontario Veterinary College during the Andrew Smith era.



Percentage by country of origin of 3,278 veterinary graduates from the Ontario Veterinary College (1862-1908).

Despite there being up to six veterinary colleges in New York State during this period (five in New York City and one at Cornell), the largest number of US students were from New York (307). Other states with more than 100 graduates included Ohio (281), Pennsylvania (199), Michigan (149) and Illinois (128). Each of these states also had veterinary college(s) during at least a portion of this period.

Dr. Smith recognizes the research assistance of Ms. Melena Hagstrom, and the assistance of Ms. Allison Salin, Co-op Librarian in the Archival and Special Collections Staff of the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada

¹ Ontario Veterinary College, Registrar. *List of OVC Graduates, 1866-1963*. Archival/Manuscript Material. Located at the Guelph McLaughlin Archives. http://trellisnew.tug-libraries.on.ca/vwebv/holdingsInfo?bibId=2377771&sk=GUELPH&pds%5Fhandle=GUEST&pds%5Fhandle=GUEST&pds_handle=GUEST

KEYWORDS:

Ontario Veterinary College
Foreign veterinary colleges
Private veterinary colleges
History of veterinary medicine

TOPIC:

Foreign veterinary colleges

LEADING QUESTION:

What Canadian veterinary college has educated almost 2,000 United States citizens?

META-SUMMARY:

One hundred years ago, many hundreds of US students went to Toronto for a veterinary education.

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.