

## Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

# New York City's Five Veterinary Colleges

By Samantha Peneyra (Guest Author)

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In 1857, eight years before Cornell University's was founded in rural upstate New York, an act was passed in the State capital of Albany to establish the New York College of Veterinary Surgeons. The New York City veterinary practice of a French veterinarian-physician by the name of Alexandre Liautard was eventually selected for the site of the college, and clinical instruction began on November 23, 1864. This was only the second veterinary college in the country at the time.

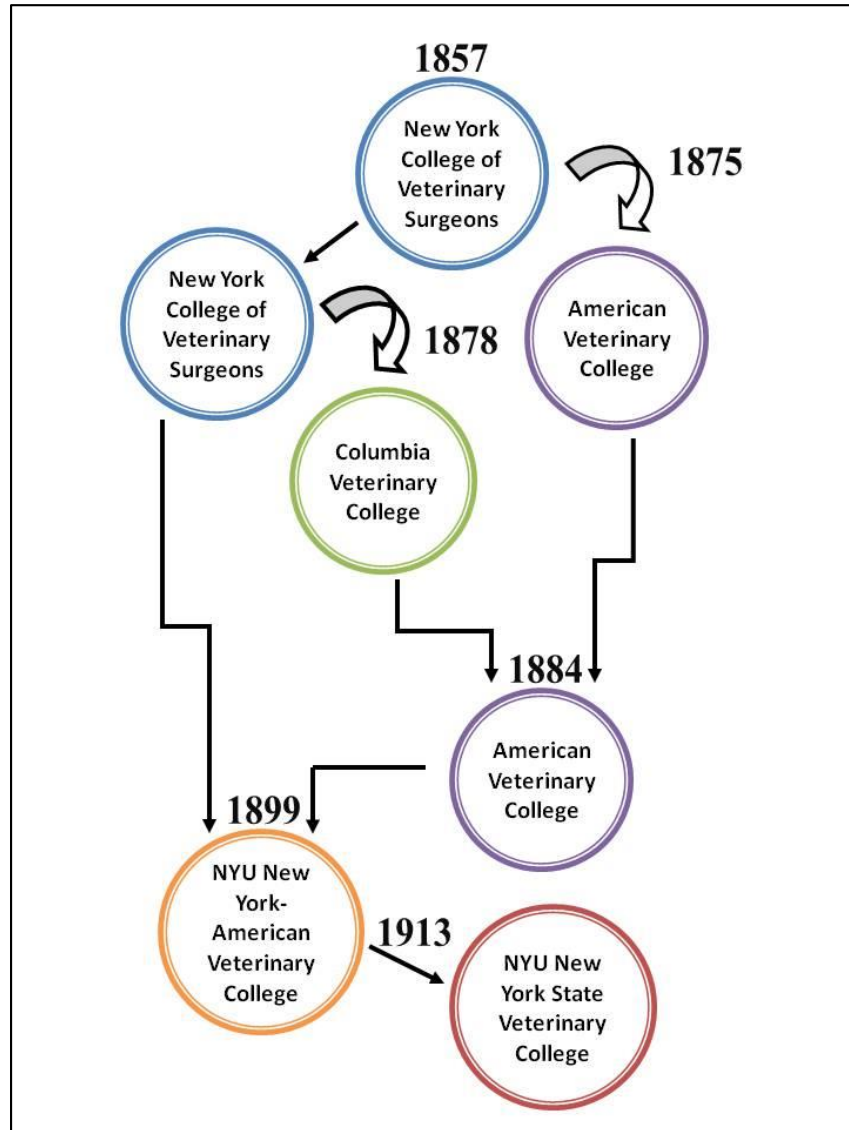
Liautard was dean of the college for about a decade when internal disturbances resulted in his resignation. Joined by several faculty members, he left the institution and founded the American Veterinary College, which provided clinical instruction at 139 West 54<sup>th</sup> Street for the next 25 years.

Problems between the board and staff persisted at the New York College of Veterinary Surgeons, and another group of faculty resigned in 1878 to found the Columbia Veterinary College. Also called the College of Comparative Medicine, the governing body of this institution contained several MDs with veterinarian Erskine Bates serving as dean.

The three veterinary institutions existed simultaneously in New York City for several years, providing instruction to hundreds of prospective veterinarians. By most accounts, Liautard was the most prominent spokesperson for the veterinary profession in the United States at this time. He continued his role as dean of the American Veterinary College, while Harry D. Gill led the New York City College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Charges of impropriety in 1884 forced Bates to resign from his leadership of the Columbia Veterinary College, and the college merged with the American Veterinary College. Despite its short history of only seven years, Columbia's 80 veterinary graduates comprised almost ten percent of the total graduates of the five colleges over their six-decade history.

In another merger, the New York College of Veterinary Surgeons and the American Veterinary College consolidated in 1899 to create an entirely new veterinary institution associated with New York University (NYU). The name of this new institution was the New York University New York-American Veterinary College, with W.J. Coates as dean. New York College of Veterinary Surgeons had almost 300 graduates between 1857 and 1899, while the American Veterinary College had twice that many graduates between 1875 and 1899.

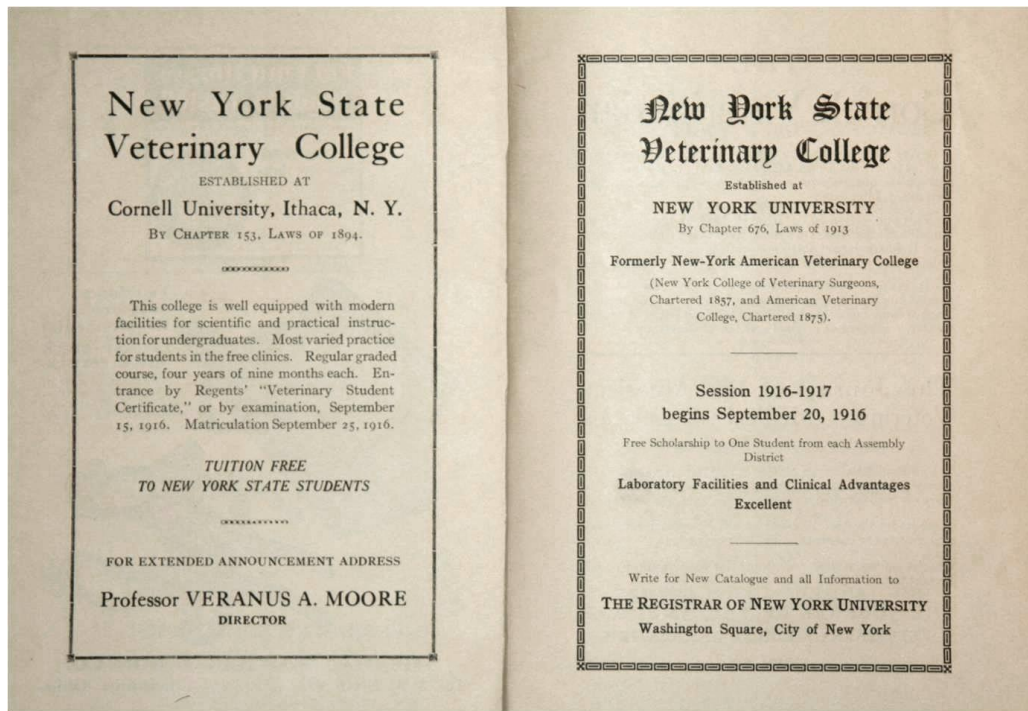


*Graphic Outline of New York City's Five Veterinary Colleges (1857-1921)*  
Created by the author, 2012

Though Cornell University had offered limited instruction in veterinary medicine since 1868, it was not until 1894 that the State passed a law authorizing the establishment of a veterinary college at the university in the rural upstate town of Ithaca.

In 1905, eleven years after Cornell was designated as a state-supported veterinary college, a bill was introduced to the New York State Assembly that would fund a veterinary college in New York City. Cornell vigorously opposed the bill, but the law was passed and New York University became home to a state-supported veterinary college in 1913. The institution was known as NYU New York State Veterinary College. It had a total of 116 graduates between the years 1899-1913.

Dean Coates died in 1916 after a long illness. Dr. Horace Hoskins served as dean until 1921, when he too passed. The institution was devastated by the loss of their beloved deans. Sadly, the challenge of funding and continued leadership, and the loss of the horse as the dominant means of city transportation, took its toll and the college suspended operation in the following year.



*Period Veterinary Publication advertising two New York State Veterinary Colleges, one at Cornell University (L) and the other at New York University (R)*  
Photograph by Dr. Donald F. Smith, 2010.

Formal veterinary education ceased to exist in New York City ninety years ago, in 1922. Ironically, it was about the same time as Cornell's medical school was pulling up its roots in Ithaca and moving to New York. The nation's most populous city has been without a veterinary college ever since.

**KEYWORDS:**

History of Veterinary Medicine  
Columbia Veterinary College  
New York College of Veterinary Surgeons  
Alexandre Liautard  
American Veterinary College  
Frederick Bates  
Harry D. Gill

W. J. Coates  
Horace Hoskins

**TOPIC:**

Veterinary Colleges in the United States

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