

American Veterinary Medical History Society

"Devoted to the Diffusion of Veterinary History"

1905-1923

St. Joseph Veterinary College St. Joseph, Missouri

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St. Joseph, Missouri was founded in 1843 by Joseph Robidoux, an early fur trader, evolving from an earlier fur trading post established by Robidoux approximately 1826 and known as Blacksnake Hills after a tribe of Sioux related Indians. The town occupied a very favorable location on the Missouri River and was the western terminus of the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad, the first railroad to reach the Missouri River. Several years later it was the eastern terminus of the Pony Express established by Russell, Majors and Waddell. Some miles west of Saint Joseph, the Saint Joseph Trail joined the trail from Independence and Westport, forming the California and Oregon Trail.

Establishment of the College

St. Joseph Veterinary College was established in 1905. For two years, classes were held in a building in South St. Joseph. In 1907, Drs. Steele, Good, and Lomax moved the school to a building at 7th and Sylvania Streets. The College offered a 3-year course, similar to other veterinary schools at that time, with a degree of Doctor of Veterinary Science. The St. Joseph Veterinary College graduated its first class, a class of 13, on March 13, 1908; one graduate completed the requirements in 1906.



The College soon outgrew this building and needed new facilities of all kinds, as well as more teachers. A building was purchased at 9th and Mary; the following nine men took stock in the school and provided the money for the building: Drs. Fred and A.C. Holkenbrink (SJ 1912), Dr. Carl Wank, Dr. R.C. Moore, Mr. Claud Madison, Dr. Rogers, Dr. E.A. Logan, J. Haukenberry, and Dr. F.M. Cahill (SJ 1908). Dr. R.C. Moore had been associated with Dr. Sesco Stewart at the Kansas City Veterinary College, but resigned there in 1912 and came to St. Joseph to help open the new school in 1913. Later, he served as president of the school until it closed in 1923.

Dr. Robert C. Moore as President

Dr. Robert C. Moore graduated from the Chicago Veterinary College in 1887. He was engaged in general practice in Holton, Kansas, until 1895 when he became associated with Dr. Sesco Stewart and Dr. J.C. Sihler in the purchase of the Kansas City Veterinary College from D. J.H. Wattles and his associates. Dr. Moore was president of the KCVC from 1898 to 1913. Later, 1914-23, he was president of the St. Joseph Veterinary College. While in Kansas City, he was also a senior member of a firm (Drs. Sesco Stewart and F.F. Brown were other members of the firm) that had a very large practice there.

In the new school, there were plenty of classrooms, dissection rooms, laboratory facilities, and a large recreation hall where basketball games could be played, and where much of the social life of the student body was enjoyed. The Ladies Auxiliary was formed, and it planned dances enjoyed by all and also held picnics in Krug Park in summers. A majority of the students were married, so they lived in St. Joseph during the entire year.

The curriculum was rigidly controlled by the U.S. Government both with respect to the course of study and the number of hours required per subject. In 1914, the faculty consisted of 21 members, including two physicians and an attorney who taught medical jurisprudence. One of the physicians taught laboratory chemistry and the other taught intestinal suturing. Among the subjects offered were: anatomy, chemistry, histology, language of medicine, parasitology, pathology, and physiology. Heavy emphasis was placed upon the course material medica.

Some of the presidents and deans of the school, who contributed greatly to the success and to the excellent education of the students, were: Drs. Fred and A.H. Holkenbrink, Dr. F.M. Cahill, Dr. E.A. Logan, Dr. R.C. Moore, Dr. Joseph Weinman (SJ 1921; he later taught at the University of Missouri and his son Donald Weinman, KSC 1946, taught anatomy at K-State), Dr. W.H. Bailey (SJ 1914), Dr. Hans Jensen, Captain F.H. Spencer, M.D., Dr. H.J. Hearington (SJ 1919), Attorney A.F. Lindsay, Dr. L.D. Brown, and numerous others.

World War I

After the United States entered World War I, the government found there was a large need for veterinarians. All men of draft age were required to sign a voluntary enlistment, subject to 24-hour call to service if the need arose, and to enter the armed forces as veterinarians immediately after graduation. Most of the classes of 1917-18 went into the service in this manner. They not only served in remount stations, where horses and mules were purchased for our government and for its allies in the War, but also served as food inspectors.

After World War I, the U.S. Government closed all private veterinary colleges, as veterinary colleges were established in conjunction with the state universities. It was with great regret that the announcement was made, to close the St. Joseph Veterinary College, perhaps in 1924. Later, it was decided to continue the school on through the summer of 1923, after graduation in April. The last class received their full quota of hours of study and graduated in November 1923; one student did not

graduate until 1924. For several years, a 4-year course had been given, and the degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine awarded upon graduation. A total of more than 420 men graduated from 1908 to 1924. With the closure of St. Joseph Veterinary College, all records were transferred to Kansas State Agricultural College, Manhattan, Kansas.

St. Joseph Veterinary College Alumni Association

In 1960, Dr. R.S. Paige (SJ 1921) began writing to a number of the alumni, inviting them to gather at his home in Alexandria, Louisiana, for a reunion. Several responded to his hospitality and met there July 12-14, 1960. The gracious hospitality of Dr. and Mrs. Paige was assisted by their son and his wife, Dr. and Mrs. Chester Paige (KSC 1932). They visited the home of Mrs. Virginia Fitzgerald, who with her family had restored the historic, old Lloyd Home, built in 1816 by one of the Lloyds of London. On July 13, an organizational meeting of the St. Joseph Veterinary College Alumni Association was held. Dr. A.F. Ezzell (SJ 1921) of Tulsa, Oklahoma, was elected President; Dr. R.S. Paige, Vice-President and also Honorary Organizing President for Life; Mrs. John Collins of Tulsa, Historian; and Mrs. Charles D. Tofflemire (SJ 1921), Secretary.

In 1961, a second reunion was held at the Paige's home in Louisiana. Dr. Ezell presided at the business meeting. All officers were elected to serve another year. It was voted to hold the 1962 meeting in St. Joseph, Missouri. St. Joseph proved to be an ideal meeting place, and on October 13-15, 1962, more than 30 men and their families came from 14 states. After an informal dinner on Sunday evening, a business meeting was held, with Dr. Ezell in charge. It was voted to issue a roster of all the alumni, with addresses as up to date as possible and with the deceased listed. All men present donated \$5.00 to this project. The following officers were elected for the ensuing year; Dr. D.C. Wilke (SJ 1923), President; Dr. J.B. Sigrist (SJ 1923), Vice-President; Mrs. P.C. Lahs (SJ 1923), Historian; and Mrs. Charles D. Tofflemire, Secretary-Treasurer. The dates of October 19-20 were set for the 1963 meeting with informal visiting on Friday evening, October 18. On Monday noon, the group was entertained by the Goetz Brewing Company in their famous Stein Room where valuable steins are on display from all over the world.

The St. Joseph Veterinary College Alumni Association continued to meet in St. Joseph in October. In John J. Riordan's book, *"Horses, Mules and Remounts: The Memoirs of a World War I Veterinary Officer"* published in 1983, Riordan states, "We are down to ten or twelve members who are physically able to attend, the oldest member being 95. I had the honor of serving as Alumni President for the Bicentennial Year – 1976."

Noted St. Joseph Veterinary College Alumni

---**Eldon D. Patterson (1910)**, St. Joseph, Missouri, died April 5, 1953. Dr. Patterson was a general practitioner (JAVMA 123:270, 1953).

---**Harlow H. McGrew (1912)**, Drexel, Missouri (JAVMA 123:270, 1953).

---**Rolla E. Carter (1914)** of Long Beach, California, died at the age of 91 on December 15, 1968. Dr. Carter had practiced in Long Beach from 1916 until 1960, treating the pets of several generations of Long Beach residents. He was an honor roll member of the AVMA, with a membership of 53 years (JAVMA 154: 864, 1969).

---**Robert L. Lowenberg (1915)**, 62, South St. Paul, Minnesota, died June 9, 1953. Dr. Lowenberg was employed by the Bureau of Animal Industry (JAVMA 123:270, 1953).

---**Russell G. Fleming (1916)** was one of 27 graduates in the class of 1916. Kerry Nelson, Douglas County Historical Society, Minnesota, interviewed Fleming at the age of 92 in 1980; the interview was published

in the Lake Region Echo on October 22, 1980. Fleming was born in Rockport, Missouri in 1888 and he said it was part of his ambition to become a veterinarian. At age 25, he enrolled in a three-year course in veterinary medicine at the St. Joseph Veterinary College. Upon graduation, he began practice in Parkers Prairie, Minnesota, a small town about 100 miles northwest of Minneapolis. On December 1, 1917, he moved to Alexandria, Minnesota, to work with Dr. Thomas Faulkner. Fleming was soon forced to treat a major disease in animals and man: tuberculosis. Fleming said "In 1923, the state and federal government entered in to help fight tuberculosis. Twenty-five veterinarians were assigned to a county, and as we completed our work in one county, we moved on to the next one." Fleming said that he treated over 200,000 cases of the disease. At the time, he still had the branding iron with the "T" shaped brand that he used to brand infected animals. Fleming had vivid memories of the depression and drought years of the early to mid-1930's. Working for the government in 1934 and 1935, he remembers buying cattle from farmers who could not feed their herds. He said "The government would give them \$20 for their best cows. He told of one farmer who was to sell most of his herd to prevent starvation. Fleming said "This farmer had 25 head at one time, but within a short span, was left with only five." Fleming said a wave of sleeping sickness in horses in the 1930's was a disease that frustrated veterinarians. Fleming said "Today the tractor has taken the place of work horses, but in earlier years, it was costlier in more than one way to lose a good horse." Fleming's office was an addition to a livery stable. His source of transportation was a horse and sleigh in the winter months, while he used a Model T car the remainder of the year. Dr. Fleming retired in 1957. According to Dr. Gerald and Naomi Jacobson (Min 1955) who live in Overland Park, Kansas, they were family friends of Dr. Fleming, who established a practice in Alexandria, Minnesota. Dr. Jacobson's father used to hunt and fish with Dr. Fleming. Dr. Jacobson's father was in the automobile business and he always serviced Dr. Fleming's cars. Dr. Fleming always purchased the same colored car so his clients wouldn't notice his new purchase. Dr. Fleming and his wife had 4 daughters. In 2010, all were deceased except for one, Jean Fleming Reynolds.

---**John Henry Gillman (1917)** was born in Jackson, Tennessee. He graduated from St. Joseph Veterinary College in 1917 and held Tennessee license number 224. Dr. Gillman served in World War I where he attained the rank of major. He practiced veterinary medicine at Somerville, Tennessee and then established a clinic with Dr. E. B. Mount in Memphis in 1930. The last thirty years of his life he spent with Jensen-Salsbery Laboratories where he did research and served as manager of the Memphis branch. While performing an autopsy on cattle in San Angelo, Texas, he contracted anthrax and recovered. He joined the AVMA in 1926. In 1938, Dr. Gillman was influential in bringing to Memphis the Seventy-Sixth Annual Convention of the AVMA in 1939, of which he was general chairman of the Committee on Local Arrangements. At this meeting, he was elected third vice president of the AVMA for 1938-39.

In 1944, the Mississippi Veterinary Medical Association honored Dr. Gillman with "Honorary Membership." He was past president of the Southern States Veterinary Medical Association; a member of the AVMA, which he served as vice president and as a member of the Rabies Control Committee; a twenty-year member of the Tennessee State Board of Veterinary Examiners; and served the Tennessee Veterinary Medical Association as first vice president from 1931-32 and as president from 1932-33. Dr. Gillman died in Memphis on May 17, 1953 (from *History of Veterinary Medicine in Tennessee* by Patricia Barclay Kirkemide and JAVMA 123:85,1953).

---**John J. Riordan (1917)** enrolled in the St. Joseph Veterinary College in the fall of 1914 and graduated from St. Joseph Veterinary College in 1917. On April 6, 1917 the United States entered the war against Germany and all eligible men were required to register for the draft. In August of that year, Dr. Riordan received a commission as a second lieutenant in the United States Army Veterinary Corps with orders to report to Camp Sheridan, Montgomery, Alabama. He served with the American Expeditionary Forces in

Europe. After the war, he was in practice in Fillmore, Missouri and later in Tarkio, Missouri. His son, John F. Riordan thought he had one of the largest large animal practices in the state of Missouri. He stated "In the year 1951 alone, he "shot" over one million ccs of hog cholera serum in addition to vaccinating for swine erysipelas."

---**Harry U. Williams (1917)**, 69, Yerington, Nevada, died October 18, 1953. After practicing in Colorado, Wyoming, and California, Dr. Williams located at Yerington in 1931, where he lived and practiced up to the time of his death (JAVMA 123:562, 1953).

---**Beck B. Bowen (1918)**, 63, St. Joseph, Missouri, died October 5, 1953. Dr. Bowen was employed by the U.S. Bureau of Animal Industry. He was a member of the National Association of Federal Veterinarians and of the AVMA (JAVMA 123:562, 1953).

---**Charles T. Riordan (1918)** was the co-owner of a hog cholera serum company in Des Moines, Iowa. He was killed in a gas explosion at the plant in February 1931.

---**Charles P. Fay (SJ 1919)** was granted Arizona License # 156 in 1951.

---**Clarence H. McElroy (SJ 1919)** served as the first dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine at Oklahoma State University from 1947-53. He was born on March 26, 1886 in Tulsa. He enrolled for the fall semester of 1900 in the college preparatory school at Oklahoma A&M College. Money was scarce so he worked as a janitor in Old Central for ten cents an hour and his "room" was a bed in the attic of the building. He recalled, "My board and room cost \$2.50 a week. One year I spent only \$90!" He went on to study general science and received his B.S. degree in June 1906.

Mac returned to the ranch for a while and then worked at a store in Jennings, Oklahoma for one and a half years. On February 1, 1909, McElroy returned to Oklahoma A&M College to work as an assistant to Dr. L.L. Lewis, head of the Department of Zoology and Veterinary Medicine. McElroy was urged by Dr. Lewis to become a veterinarian; he entered the St. Joseph Veterinary College where he received the D.V.M. degree in 1919.

After graduation, McElroy returned to Stillwater, Oklahoma as an assistant professor in the newly formed School of Veterinary Medicine. Unfortunately, due to financial problems and politics, the school closed. McElroy became the dean of the School of Science and Literature in 1925, as well as professor of veterinary medicine and bacteriology. He served as acting president of Oklahoma A&M College in 1928 and dean of men from 1928-47. At the 89th AVMA Convention in Atlanta in 1969, Dean McElroy was installed as honorary vice president. The Oklahoma State University Veterinary Medicine Building, the oldest building in the veterinary medicine complex, was named McElroy Hall to honor Oklahoma State University's first dean.

---**Arthur William Groth (1920)** was born January 30, 1898 in Postville, Iowa, to Ernest and Augusta Groth. He attended schools in Postville and graduated from St. Joseph Veterinary College, St. Joseph, Missouri in 1920. He married twice. He married Helen J. unknown (her surname may be Shanks, but this is not proven) in Iowa, about 1922. Helen was born June 23, 1897 and died December 15, 1932 at 35 years of age. She is buried in the Frankville, Winneshiek Co. Iowa cemetery. On Feb 14, 1938 he married Selma Limmer at Chester, South Dakota. He practiced veterinary medicine in Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota. A.W. and Helen lived in West Union, Fayette County, Iowa from about 1930 -1938. He practiced veterinary medicine in Ortonville, Minnesota, from 1938 to 1955. From 1955 to 1964 he worked for the United States Department of Agriculture out of Watertown, South Dakota. The family lived in Ortonville from 1938 to 1955 and in Watertown, South Dakota from 1955 to 1964, moving then to Big Stone City,

South Dakota and resided there from 1964 to 1971 when they moved to Ortonville, Minnesota. He was a member of the United Methodist Church in Ortonville and also a member of the Masonic Lodge, receiving his 50 Year Pin. He was interested in cattle buying for many years. Dr. A. W. Groth, 89, died Oct. 20, 1987 at Northridge Residence in Ortonville, Minnesota. Services were Saturday, Oct. 24, 11 a.m. at the United Methodist Church, Ortonville with Rev. Frederick O. Atkinson officiating. Arrangements were by Larson Funeral Home, Ortonville. He was survived by his wife, Selma of Ortonville; 4 daughters, Justine Billie Barrette, Escondido, California; Gloria Jeanne Boettcher, Bremerton, Washington; Carolyn Garrett, Fort Collins, Colorado and Ruth Ann Wildeman, Cherokee. Two brothers, Fred Groth, Postville and Luther Groth, Mabel, Minnesota. One sister, Ruth Archer, Mesa, Arizona; 7 grandsons and one granddaughter. He was preceded in death by 2 daughters, Mary Lila and an infant daughter, Vera Francis; his first wife, Helen; 2 brothers and one sister. Pallbearers were Alvin Limmer, Lee Limmer, Parker Wildeman, John Garrett, Peter Wildeman and Jack Boettcher. Source: Postville Herald; 10/28/1987. Submitted by Sharyl Ferrall.

---**Carl Edward Larsen (1920)** was granted Arizona License # 154 in 1951. He came to Phoenix in 1951 after practicing in Rushville, Indiana. He died February 29, 1962 in Phoenix.

---**Joseph Luckeroth (SJ 1921)** began his studies at the Kansas City Veterinary College. When it closed in 1918, he transferred to the St. Joseph Veterinary College and graduated in 1921. After graduation, he opened his own practice in Seneca, Kansas, working primarily with horses. He was one of the only veterinarians in the area who would work with poultry. Joseph Luckeroth was a nephew of Albert Wempe (KCVC 1915). He died in 1959.

---**Joseph E. Weinman (SJ 1921)** taught veterinary students at the Kansas City Veterinary College and the St. Joseph Veterinary College and served as head of the Department of Anatomy for three years at St. Joseph Veterinary College until it closed in 1923. He subsequently was in private practice for nearly 25 years and left his practice in Lincoln, Nebraska in 1946 to join the embryonic faculty when the School of Veterinary Medicine opened at the University of Missouri. Dr. Weinman is also listed as a 1913 graduate of the Kansas City Veterinary College.

---**Melvin L. Dietrich (1922)** died December 12, 1969 in Newton, Kansas.

---**W.R. Lawrence (SJ 1923)** was originally from Mississippi and in general practice in Kosciusko. He was president of his senior class at the St. Joseph Veterinary College. He served the federal government in tuberculosis eradication work and moved to Tennessee in the mid 1940's. He was assistant to the state veterinarian in 1949 and practiced until his death, April 14, 1964. Dr. Lawrence was president of the Tennessee Veterinary Medical Association from 1949-50 and was named "Veterinarian of the Year" in 1961.

---**Grant Ackerman** enrolled at St. Joseph Veterinary College in 1923, but transferred to Colorado State University when St. Joseph closed. His son, Ed Ackerman graduated from Kansas State College in 1955.

---**John Thomas Dungan (SJVC)** was granted Arizona License #35 in 1929. He was in bovine practice in Glendale around 1944.

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